

**The Heartland Abroad: The Rotary Club's Mission of Civic Internationalism**

by

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## **Dedication**

For Mom – a life that might have been, that should have been.

## **Acknowledgements**

No one can produce a staggering work of genius like this without some help. My dissertation committee gets first nod. I will always be indebted to Matt Lassiter for his patient encouragement and understanding over the years. When most anyone else would have given up on this project, he came through time and again. The same holds true for Richard, my other co-chair, because he always held me to a higher standard of inquiry and writing. I would never have conceived of this project without my coursework and interactions with both Penny Von Eschen and Peggy Somers. There were others not on the committee who gave valuable input nonetheless: Fernando Coronil, Paul Kramer, Julie Skurski, Charles Bright, Rebecca Scott, Matt Connelly, Dario Gaggio, and Charles Hayford all come to mind. There are others whose names escape me right now, but they each contributed in their own way and without hesitation.

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## **Abstract**

### **The Heartland Abroad: The Rotary Club's Mission of Civic Internationalism**

The expansion of Rotary International (RI) from 1912 to World War II expressed the going abroad of U.S. businessmen in a period of U.S. global ascendance. Service to the community – both local and international – was the touchstone of their ideology and participation in international circuits of trade the source of institutional growth. In this capacity, the service club defined itself as an international non-governmental organization (INGO) operating between states and markets. Though originally from and concentrated in the United States, RI managed to position itself during the interwar period as a middle ground between the business and professional classes throughout the world, between the American heartland and the abroad.

This dissertation identifies RI's vision of international cooperation among businessmen in the name of community service as its "civic internationalism" – a businessman's version of a civilizing mission to the world. In effect, RI operated as a private-sector application of Wilsonianism during the interwar period. RI's civic internationalism, therefore, marked an important transition in the nature of U.S. international relations in the first half of the twentieth century. By positing a transnational solidarity of businessmen, RI opened up a space for recruitment and participation of tens of thousands of non-U.S. businessmen through their own clubs outside the United States. These non-U.S. Rotarians joined with RI on the promise of full participation in a



globalizing economy gravitating more and more around the United States. Through case studies of Rotary clubs in Wichita, Tokyo, and Havana, this dissertation examines how the promises of RI's civic internationalism played out between the wars. Overall, the dissertation argues that RI's civic internationalism contributed to U.S. economic and cultural imperialism thanks to its non-state, non-profit status.

As a transnational network of businessmen, RI represented just one stream in a rising flood of INGOs over the same period. Many historians now recognize the important roles played by such non-state actors in a global civil society and thus call for a more transnational approach to U.S. history. Investigating RI's international expansion into scores of countries worldwide by 1940 represents a step in that direction.

## **Introduction**

### **Rotary International and the Promises of Civic Internationalism**

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Our boundaries have stretched far out. France has felt the enlivening touch of Rotary; Cuba has been peacefully invaded; Uruguay is the pioneer in South America; China has led off in the Orient; and the far-off Fiji Islands now acclaim a new star of social and business promise. The International Association of Rotary Clubs has fairly won its title, for the sun never sets on Rotarians.

John Poole, President of the I.A.R.C., Annual Message, 1919.<sup>1</sup>

Such men as these are crackpot realists, who, ... in the name of practicality have projected a utopian image of capitalism.

C. Wright Mills, 1963.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Heartland Abroad**

Everyone agreed the Rotary club of Granite City, Illinois had the best display on “international service” for the 1929 conference of Rotary clubs in southern Illinois. The display “illustrated in a forceful way the inter-dependence of nations” by showing “the particular product of each of fifty-three nations, upon which the United States depends...with a world map as the background.” The display was so popular, in fact, it ran the circuit of local public schools. Thanks to their local Rotary club, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Convention Proceedings of the Ninth Annual International Convention of the I.A.R.C.*; Salt Lake City, Utah; August 1919, 23.

<sup>2</sup> C. Wright Mills, “On Knowledge and Power,” in *Power, Politics, and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Ballantine, 1963), 610 – 11.

schoolchildren of Granite City could learn about their place in the world along with hundreds of Rotarians from local towns and cities.<sup>3</sup>

The details of the display, however, reveal much more about how fifty Granite City Rotarians envisioned their place in the world. Laid out across a table, each nation had a card with its own name and flag printed and a small, physical representation of that nation's "particular product." A dark ribbon emerged from each card up to the world map in the background. Rather than connect each card with its place on the map, each ribbon connected to the teeth of a gear with "Rotary International" written inside: the familiar symbol of all Rotary clubs worldwide. The "Rotary wheel" dominated the world map, appearing as the common destination for the world's economic contributions to the United States. For the Granite City Rotarians, international relations were premised on world trade and Rotary International (RI), their parent organization based in Chicago, the center of those trade relations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *The Rotarian*, September 1929, 40. For details on the club's entire history, see "Granite City, Illinois Rotary Club," Club Historical Files, Rotary International Archives, Evanston, Illinois. [Hereafter RI Archives.]

<sup>4</sup> For the most recent examination of RI in an international context, see Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, chapter 1, "The Service Ethic: How Bourgeois Men Made Peace with Babbitry"; which contrasts the Duluth and Dresden Rotary clubs as a way to demonstrate the slow takeover of European bourgeois culture by U.S. consumer culture and for the only complete treatment of service clubs in academic literature, Jeffrey A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993). Though Charles devotes only one chapter to the international dimensions of these organizations, he focuses on service clubs in general within the domestic narrative of twentieth century U.S. history. My emphasis on the internationalism of Rotary clubs in their own right and as a means to investigating closely how they were representative (or not) of broader trends in U.S. cultural and economic expansion distinguishes the scope and character of Charles's work from this dissertation in significant ways. See also Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 108 – 112 and Thomas A. Wikle, "International Expansion of the American-style Service Club," *Journal of American Culture*, 22 (2): 45 – 52, 1999." Two fundamental studies of Rotary International in its first 30 years are Charles F. Marden in *Rotary and Its Brothers: An Analysis and Interpretation of the Men's Service Clubs* (Princeton, 1935) and the University of Chicago Social Science Survey Committee, *Rotary? A University Group Looks at the Rotary Club of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1934). The latter text provides much detail about the

More than market relations were in mind, however. To the left of the world map and the Rotary wheel was a stylized image of an East Asian couple and to the right an Indian Raja riding a decorated elephant. Forming a kind of triptych of both world commerce and world cultures, the display explained: “It is not distance but discord that separates a neighborhood from the world....” For the Granite City Rotarians, no culture was too exotic, no civilization too distant, because “under Rotary all the world is one – through service and intertwined interests.” Cultural difference and economic “interdependence” merged into a vision of international relations united by Rotarians’ shared devotion to civic cooperation through “service” and their “intertwined interests” in a global economy. Nowhere could one see a U.S. flag. The world envisioned by the Granite City Rotarians did not need it.

This dissertation explores what I call the civic internationalism of the Granite City Rotarians and tens of thousands of their counterparts throughout the U.S. and around the world over the interwar period. In 1929, Rotary International had at least one club in forty-five independent nations and many more in U.S., British, and other European possessions and territories. Though originally from and concentrated in the United States, Rotary clubs outside the U.S. constituted one fourth of RI’s 3,178 clubs in 1929.<sup>5</sup> RI’s international presence during the interwar period carried on the business progressivism

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first decades of the Chicago club and especially on its rapid transition from its initial emphasis on business profit through networking with potential business clients to a civic-minded service club of businessmen and professionals bent on serving the community. See also Harold Bahlke, *Rotary and American Culture – A Historical Study of Ideology*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1956 for a close analysis RI’s convention proceedings during its first fifty years from the perspective of the emergence of the middle classes in the U.S. Two good, comprehensive histories of RI are David C. Forward, *A Century of Service: The Story of Rotary International* (Evanston, IL: Rotary International, 2003) and David Shelley Nicholl, *The Golden Wheel: The Story of Rotary, 1905 to the Present* (Plymouth, England: MacDonald and Evans, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> “The Growth of Rotary,” in *Convention Proceedings, Twentieth Annual International Convention*; Dallas, Texas; 27 – 31 May 1929, 6.

and cultural internationalism of the early 1910s through its ideology of service.<sup>6</sup> RI presented itself as a kind of Esperanto for an emerging transnational class of businessmen and professionals and its civic internationalism as an apolitical, uplifting alternative to the vicissitudes of local partisanship and nationalist agendas. Service to the community – both local and international – was the touchstone of its ideology and participation in international circuits of trade its source of institutional growth. RI’s civic internationalism claimed to rise above the political because it defined its members primarily as responsible, professional marketplace actors and its organizational mission beyond the purview of the state – any state.

RI positioned itself as a middle ground during the interwar period between the U.S. and the international community, between the business and professional classes of multiple nations and empires, between states and markets.<sup>7</sup> More than just a function of the “awkward dominion” of U.S. power after World War I, an iteration of the associational model of the New Era, or one of many “chosen instruments” of prewar U.S. foreign policy, RI sought to operate with a strategic distance from both states and markets as only an international non-governmental organization (INGO) could do.<sup>8</sup> The strategy

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<sup>6</sup> This long-term periodization of the Progressive Era up to 1940 rather than 1920 follows Daniel T. Rodgers’ approach in *Atlantic Crossings* and allows for a continuity between that era and postwar discourses on and institutions for human rights. For a similar approach to periodization of international relations of the U.S., see Bright and Geyer, “Where in the World is America?": The History of the United States in the Global Age” in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 63 – 99.

<sup>7</sup> Much like the model used by Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650 – 1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> See Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919 – 1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982) and *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900 – 1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

became a fundamental feature of the ever-expanding number of non-governmental organizations that have come to populate the global community over the course of the twentieth century. In that sense, RI formed only one part of a growing trend of INGOs moving in, around, through, and despite state structures and policies over the same period.<sup>9</sup> But not all INGOs had the same relationships to states and markets. In the case of RI, blurring boundaries between states and markets became a complex dance among nations and empires, races and cultures, cities and regions, professions and industries. In this manner, RI became a useful means of entry for U.S. corporate and state interests as their employees established and/or joined their local Rotary clubs both inside and outside the United States, attended weekly luncheons, spoke at club and public events, and mingled with their families at intimate social events and charitable activities. It was a stretch for Rotary's incoming president to proclaim that "the sun never sets on Rotarians" in 1919.<sup>10</sup> Within a decade, it was a simple fact.

RI's civic internationalism expressed the going abroad of U.S. business and professional classes when U.S. power was ascendant but not yet developed and European empires were beginning their decline. The contraction of European colonialism in the

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<sup>9</sup> Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1997) and *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> A charter member of the Washington, D.C. Rotary club in 1912, John Poole, Rotary's President for 1919 – 20, also established and ran his own bank, Federal National Bank of Washington D.C. from 1913 to 1933, when he founded The American Company, "a financial and business firm." Poole also served as an officer on many other professional and civic organizations: The National Red Cross, the YMCA, the Columbia Institution for the Deaf, and President of the Advertising Club of Washington, D.C. He was chairman of five Liberty Loan campaigns and a trustee of the American University. Altogether, Poole embodied the ideal Rotarian. *Paul Harris and His Successors: Profiles in Leadership* (Evanston, Ill.: Rotary International, 1997), 37 – 38.

aftermath of World War I entailed a vast opportunity for the United States.<sup>11</sup> How the nation rose to the occasion – and how it failed as well – during the interwar years reveals much about the nature and consequences of increasing U.S. economic, cultural, and political power in the world since then. Terms like U.S. imperialism, liberal internationalism, progressivism, and Wilsonianism are used to describe and explain various dimensions of growing U.S. international engagement during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Contrary trends, meanwhile, fall under terms like protectionism, neutrality, isolationism, nativism, and economic nationalism.<sup>12</sup> These oppositional terms become more entrenched when mapped on to presumed regional identities: the cosmopolitanism of urban centers on the coasts vs. the provincialism of smaller cities and towns in the South, Midwest, and the Plains. Such terms, however, share a common focus on what Thomas Bender called “the national box”: a methodological privileging of the state and its activities when examining international contacts and exchange.<sup>13</sup> From this perspective, the presence and influence of the United States in the world was primarily a function of the policies, agencies, and actions of the U.S. government.

The Granite City Rotarians’ vision of international relations, however, defies these terms and their analytical approach. Their display was not anomalous – it won recognition and traveled throughout their schools. The problem is the need to bridge the

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<sup>11</sup> See Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> For two outstanding reviews of the political and social complexities of internationalist trends during the interwar years, see Robert D. Johnson, *The Peace Progressives and American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995) and Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America’s Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 7.

conceptual gaps created by our limited terms of analysis, to find a more unified approach to understanding the historical relevance of this kind of international vision and this kind of international organization. How and why did the Granite City Rotarians see their place in the world in this way in 1929?

In similar manner, how the United States met the enormous challenges in the aftermath of World War I exceeds such analytical terms and their presumed oppositional relations. Many historians writing from diverse perspectives have now come to recognize the roles played by transnational networks, international markets, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) working across borders, regions, and continents both before and after the Great War.<sup>14</sup> The United States has been in and of the world – a

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<sup>14</sup> Important monographs using this approach include James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870 – 1920* (New York, 1986); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1800 – 1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); idem., *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900 – 1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Harvard Press, 1999); Matthew Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876 – 1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1998); Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); idem., *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Jessica C. E. Glenow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher, eds., *Culture and International History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003); Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: the Americanization of the World, 1869 – 1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937 – 1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865 – 1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); and Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2008).



“transnational nation” – because individual citizens, religious groups, international markets, transnational corporations, intellectual debates, and voluntary associations were circulating new (and old) ideas, policy agendas, business practices, cultural products, and so on.<sup>15</sup> This change in methodological approach, called the “transnational turn” by one scholar, has opened up greater possibilities for understanding how and why the United States adapted to its expanding global ties and interests during the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Put another way, the growing presence of the U.S. in the world emerged from the constant entangling of U.S. and non-U.S. citizens, organizations, and interests – both public and private – over time and space. The investigation of social interaction outside the purview of the state as well as beyond the territorial confines of the United States, in short, is crucial to understanding the embeddedness of the U.S. in the world.

This dissertation takes up the general call for a transnational approach to U.S. history through a history of the international growth of Rotary International. The rapid international expansion of Rotary clubs just before, during, and especially after World War I presents a remarkable case study in the flow of ideas, norms, and practices within a transnational network of U.S. and non-U.S. businessmen and professionals forged at the height of the Progressive Era. Though episodic in growth and fraught with contradictions

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<sup>15</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). For a useful examination from several perspectives of the value and meaning of the term “transnational” and its methodological applications, see “AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,” *American Historical Review*, 111: 5 (2006).

<sup>16</sup> Akira Iriye, “The Transnational Turn,” *Diplomatic History*, 31: 3 (2007), 373 – 376. See also Ian Tyrrell, “American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,” *American Historical Review*, 96: 4, 1031 – 1055 and Michael J. Hogan, who called for a closer examination of “nonstate actors...to include ethnic, racial, religious, and women’s groups, as well as business and labor organizations...the role of international institutions, from multinational corporations, to UN agencies, to the International Red Cross; and the history of the international women’s movement, the peace movement, the environmental movement, and the movement for human rights.” Michael J. Hogan, *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations Since 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 164.

and failures, RI's international expansion led to one of three clubs being outside the United States by 1935.<sup>17</sup> In other words, despite a worldwide economic depression and isolationists in the U.S. Congress, RI was straddling nations and empires by bringing together tens of thousands of business and professional men in the name of service to the local community and greater international peace and understanding. However utopian RI's ideology and rhetoric may have been during the period, its institutional reach was undeniable – and full of consequences for its members and their families both at “home” in the American heartland as well as outside the United States. With over 1.2 million members worldwide in 2008 and the majority outside the U.S. since c. 1970, RI managed to transform its internationalist aspirations of the Progressive Era into an INGO with clubs in nearly every corner of the globe well before the end of the twentieth-century.

RI's success at institutional reproduction both inside and outside the U.S. had its origins in a series of adaptations that are best understood through a transnational lens of interpretation.<sup>18</sup> Established in the chaotic business world of Chicago in 1905, the first

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<sup>17</sup> In terms of membership growth, the year 1935 marked the height of non-U.S. participation during the interwar years as Nazi Germany and its European allies began shutting down all Rotary clubs at that time (and Japan by 1940). Of the 160,567 individual members in RI for that year, 71% (114,557) were in the US, 11.5% (18,350) in Great Britain/Ireland, and 17% (27,660) spread throughout all of Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, northern Africa, and Australia/New Zealand. *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention*; Mexico City, Mexico; 17 – 21 June 1935; Report of the Secretary, Table III, “Statement of Membership,” 433.

<sup>18</sup> Parallel women's organizations have received good treatment on this point. In addition to Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire*, see Linda Schott, *Reconstructing Women's Thoughts: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom before World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and idem, “Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women's Organizations, 1888 – 1945,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 5 (Dec., 1994), 1571 – 1600. On the secularization and professionalization of the women's foreign missionary movement and of foreign missionary societies in general, see Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Women's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870 – 1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 150 – 170. Hill describes the transition from paying to praying members and from enthusiastic amateurs with religious drive to paid organizers with knowledge

Rotary club combined the benefits of social networking among businessmen and professionals with the claims of social trusteeship through “community service.”<sup>19</sup> Unbound by the genteel codes of older, more elite social clubs and the secrecy and ritualism of fraternal lodges and Freemasonry, the Chicago club first began by rotating its regular lunch gatherings among its members in order to learn more about the business and/or profession of each member (and thus ending up with the name ‘rotary.’)<sup>20</sup> After a few years of experimentation and debate within the Chicago club, the mix of networking and moderate business progressivism developed beyond a simple form of social capital among Chicago businessmen into an institutional formula for greater civic cooperation among middle-class, urban professionals and businessmen in first-tier cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Kansas City, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Contrary to

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of the foreign mission field. RI’s move from almost crass business networking and *ad hoc* establishment of new clubs to its project of civic internationalism followed a similar trajectory, except that Rotary’s starting point was secular.

<sup>19</sup> For a thorough discussion of the concept of “social trusteeship” and the rise of the professions, see Steven Brint, *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and for the history of the original Rotary club of Chicago, Oren Arnold, *The Golden Strand: An Informal History of the Rotary Club of Chicago* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> The full literature on fraternalism, voluntary associations, and club life in the U.S. is vast, encompassing the colonial to the very recent. W. Hampton Sides, *Stomping Grounds: A Pilgrim’s Progress Through Eight American Subcultures* (New York: Morrow, 1992); Jason Kaufman, *For the Common Good?: American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) ) for an excellent review of the role of voluntary associations, club life, and fraternal organizations in the United States before the New Deal and World War II. On the cross-class nature of lodges and the transition to service clubs, see Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) as well as Clifford Putney, “Service Over Secrecy: How Lodge-Style Fraternalism Yielded Popularity to Men’s Service Clubs,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Summer 1993); 179 – 190; David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890 – 1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Alvin J. Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1980).

later stereotypes, the earliest Rotary clubs represented an urban social movement of businessmen that was national in scope.<sup>21</sup>

The formula, however, crossed political borders with relative ease. The merger of the new “business conscience” in political discourse with growing demands for better regulation of national markets and professionalization of business practices had widespread national appeal by 1910.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the National Association of Rotary Clubs (N.A.R.C.) formed that year and continued its radial pattern of expansion from the largest U.S. cities into second-tier urban centers across the United States.<sup>23</sup> Within just two years, however, clubs also began popping up in Canada, Ireland, Scotland, and Great

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<sup>21</sup> For the classic study of a small, mid-western town and the role of the Rotary club in that town, see Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown; a study in American culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929), 301 – 309 and *Middletown in Transition; a study in cultural conflicts* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937). In literature, Sinclair Lewis’ character “Babbitt” became synonymous with the small-town rube: Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922). See Chapter XXI for Lewis’s treatment of the Zenith Boosters’ Club, “a world-force for optimism,” 257 – 262. Jeffrey Charles devotes a chapter to Lewis, Mencken, and other critics of RI’s boosterism in *Service Clubs in American Society*, chapter 4, 86 – 103.

<sup>22</sup> There are many important studies on this broad phenomenon for this period and its relationship to the rise of the “new middle classes” in the United States. Still an authoritative text is Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877 – 1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967) and idem., *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962). Other important contributions include Richard L. McCormick, “The Discovery that Business Corrupts Politics: A Reappraisal of the Origins of Progressivism,” *The American Historical Review*, 86: 2 (April 1981), 247 – 274; Daniel T. Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” *Reviews in American History*, (December 1982), 113 – 131; Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); and Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870 – 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). More recent contributions include Jeffrey M. Hornstein, *A Nation of Realtors: A Cultural History of the Twentieth-Century American Middle Class* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), esp. chaps. 1 - 3; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870 – 1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003), which emphasizes “anti-corruption” as a significant common denominator in progressivism; and Walter A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston, eds., *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class* (New York: Routledge, 2001). See also Dawley, *Changing the World* and Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World*, both of which take on an internationalist perspective.

<sup>23</sup> Jui-Cheng Huang and Peter Gould, “The Diffusion in an Urban Hierarchy: The Case of Rotary Clubs,” *Economic Geography*, 50: 4 (1974), 333 – 340.

Britain. Renamed the International Association of Rotary Clubs in 1912, the I.A.R.C. was well on its way to international growth despite no formal plans for doing so. Moving from inside the city limits of Chicago to beyond the borders of the United States and across the Atlantic took only seven years – and into Latin America only ten years. The Rotary club, in short, has been an INGO almost from its inception. Its status as a local civic organization with international reach was crucial to its early success. But only a transnational approach can capture this overall dynamic and demonstrate its synergistic effect on both U.S. and non-U.S. business and political cultures.

Furthermore, the struggle to rationalize and standardize the institutional growth of the I.A.R.C. (renamed Rotary International in 1922) became a significant challenge that resonated with contemporary debates on the roles and responsibilities of the United States in the world. As an emerging transnational social network of businessmen and professionals, the Rotary club became a conduit for expressing and acting on competing visions of international engagement from the club level to the intercontinental. With the outbreak of war in Europe, the U.S. clubs turned toward Cuba (and soon most of Latin America) while experiencing significant growth throughout North America as well. The Great War turned out to be a boon for U.S. voluntary associations in general, and especially so for Rotary clubs and their newfangled imitators: the Lions clubs and Kiwanis clubs.<sup>24</sup> With the support of hundreds of Rotary clubs spread throughout every part of the United States, the I.A.R.C. was already pushing forward with “international extension” well before Armistice Day, 1918.

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<sup>24</sup> See Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*, for the complete story on how Lions and Kiwanis clubs followed in the footsteps of the Rotary club a decade after its establishment in Chicago.

By 1919, Rotary clubs were particularly well positioned to take off internationally. Unlike similar clubs and many other voluntary associations in the United States at the time, Rotary clubs were already well on their way to constructing their entire institutional vision around BOTH local community service AND international engagement with businessmen and professionals around the world.<sup>25</sup> In the moral universe of Rotary, these two secular impulses of the Progressive Era merged into a secular, market-friendly form of humanitarian uplift distinctly business class, fraternal, and locally run. The combination distinguished any given Rotary club from the many missionary societies and religious groups long active outside the United States before and during the twentieth century as well as large philanthropic foundations like the Ford Foundation.<sup>26</sup> Rotary's internal debates over and experimentation with international expansion evolved in a transnational context: "service" became an ideological common denominator for local civic activism as well as international strides toward peace. That Rotary's notion of "service" was heavily laced with fundamental contradictions drawn from U.S. nationalism; free market ideologies; and hierarchies of gender, race, and class

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<sup>25</sup> Many other international non-governmental organizations of course existed before Rotary, but not with this particular formulation. See Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717 – 1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) on Freemasonry and David Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: the Boy Scouts, the YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870 – 1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) for a detailed account of the YMCA and the Boy Scouts, especially on the importance of professionalization and secularization in their evolution and growth. Also, Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire* on the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and Clarence P. Shedd, *History of the World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations* (London: World's Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1955) on the YMCA. For the International Red Cross, Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (London: Harper Collins, 1998) and for complementary histories of the American Red Cross, Michele Turk, *Blood, Sweat and Tears: an Oral History of the American Red Cross* (Robbinsville, NJ: E Street Press, 2006) and Patrick Gilbo, *The American Red Cross: The First Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Volke R. Berghahn, "Philanthropy and Diplomacy in the 'American Century,'" in Michael J. Hogan, ed., *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the 'American Century'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 379 – 415.

was inevitable. The Rotary club was a product of its time and place of origin. Despite those deep contradictions, the combination of community and international service into one ideological bundle was couched in universalist terms much like President Wilson's own rhetoric in support of U.S. involvement in European warfare after 1916 and his vision for a postwar international system for peace and self-determination after 1918.<sup>27</sup> When President Wilson left for Paris in late 1918, thousands of Rotarians throughout North America, Cuba, and Great Britain shared in his aspirations for a new world order.

In similar manner, Rotary's own marriage of the "civic" and "the international" formed the core of its own civilizing mission: its civic internationalism. Unlike the Wilsonian vision for a new international system, however, Rotary's civic internationalism turned on its formal status as a non-state, non-profit organization.<sup>28</sup> The adjective "civic" captures the diverse forms of "community service" carried out by local clubs in cooperation with kindred voluntary associations and without formal state control while the term "internationalism" points up the transnational nature of Rotary's business progressivism, its appeal beyond U.S. borders soon after its inception, and an

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<sup>27</sup> For a good analysis of the international consequences of Wilsonian rhetoric, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> In the eyes of the League of Nations, however, RI's status as a non-profit organization was not a given. In 1926, it did not appear in the League's *Handbook of International Organisations*, even though RI fulfilled all requirements for inclusion, apparently because it was interpreted as having an "aim at commercial gain or pecuniary profit." *Handbook of International Organisations (Associations, Bureaux, Committee, etc.)*, (Geneva: League of Nations, 1926), 5 – 6. By 1929, however, RI had made its case, appearing under the rubric of "Humanitarianism, Religion, and Morals," along with the YMCA, the International Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and so on rather than under the category of "Trade and Industry" alongside the International Chamber of Commerce or under "Economics and Finance" alongside, for example, the International Institute of the Middle Classes. *Handbook of International Organisations (Associations, Bureaux, Committee, etc.)*, (Geneva: League of Nations, 1929). For a detailed history of the International Chamber of Commerce before World War II, see George L. Ridgeway, *Merchants of Peace: The History of the International Chamber of Commerce* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1959).

international system that guaranteed peace and stability as an imagined endpoint shared by all members in all countries that hosted Rotary clubs. Though idealistic in its managerial approach to international relations, RI's internationalist vision was no more naïve than the Kellogg-Briand Pact or more ineffective than the League of Nations in the prevention of war. Moreover, unlike the ultimate failures of the League of Nations first in the U.S. Senate and then in international politics by the 1930s, Rotary clubs managed to achieve significant growth and evolution during the interwar years. Though Wilsonian in flavor, Rotary's civic internationalism blossomed in the interwar years largely due to its organizational strategies as a non-state actor operating in a transnational setting and in the name of serving the local community. While Wilson's dreams unraveled and U.S. foreign policy lacked coherence, Rotary clubs thrived throughout the United States and around the world. This was not a paradox. The international expansion of Rotary clubs was an alternative way for U.S. businessmen and professionals to connect with their presumed counterparts, their fellow Rotarians, in the rest of the world – and for the world to respond in kind. A transnational perspective that encompasses the activities of an international voluntary association like RI removes this apparent disconnect between public and private modes of international engagement in the interwar period.

Rotary's expansion outside the United States during the interwar years, therefore, serves as an important counterfactual to the familiar narratives of Wilson's failures in U.S. domestic politics, the presumed strength of isolationist and nativist sentiments in the smaller towns and cities of the American heartland, the disorganization of U.S. economic and cultural interests abroad, and the central role of the nation-state in understanding the



nature of international contact in general.<sup>29</sup> As a transnational history of a non-state institution, the story of Rotary's international expansion offers unusual insight into the participation of the American heartland in the projection of U.S. cultural, economic, and political power in the world and the impact of that same dynamic on the United States as well. The capacity of individual Rotarians, clubs, and the international organization itself to weave in and around state agencies, laws, and officials was hardly unlimited. But, driven by its civic internationalism, the organization's activities and aspirations, when seen in aggregate and from a transnational perspective, show how international engagement at the personal, social, and non-state levels during the interwar period were far thicker and more enduring than previously understood – and far more than just U.S. foreign policy done “on the cheap.” Though a consensus has emerged on a transnational methodology, we still lack a coherent understanding of the interwar years as a key transitional period in U.S. international relations. The variety and complexity of international organizations during the period requires our finding a conceptual bridge across state/non-state and market/non-market divisions. Examination of RI's vision of civic internationalism takes a step in this direction.

As a point of departure, therefore, this dissertation examines Rotary International from three distinct perspectives. The first centers on RI as a catalyst for global marketization and accelerant of U.S. consumer culture: what Victoria de Grazia called the “market empire” of the United States. Deeply embedded in market relations and a

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<sup>29</sup> It is easy to overlook the collective impact of an INGO like RI because of its positioning between states and markets. How much more so when not considered as a fundamental feature of U.S. international activity? For example, RI's civic internationalism showed little of the “zig-zag” of “independent internationalism” in U.S. foreign policy in the period. See Joan Hoff Wilson, *American Business & Foreign Policy, 1920 – 1933* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971). Also, Michael J. Hogan, *Informal Entente: The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1918 – 1928* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977).

consumerist ethos, Rotary clubs nevertheless represented more than a cultural expression of economic power.<sup>30</sup> Second, RI did operate as a substitute for the U.S. government before World War II, advancing the national interests of the United States abroad in numerous unofficial but consequential ways. What Emily Rosenberg called “chosen instruments of the promotional state,” however, were more complex and pervasive than ever imagined.<sup>31</sup> Third, as a voluntary association contributing to the growing transnational web of non-profits and INGOs, RI participated in what Akira Iriye called the emergence of a “global community” in the twentieth century. But RI’s civic internationalism represented particularly important ideological and institutional innovations at the nexus of the state, civil society, and the marketplace.<sup>32</sup> This

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<sup>30</sup> In *Irresistible Empire*, de Grazia makes a compelling case by pointing out the five basic features of what she calls the “Market Empire” of the United States: 1) Moral justification for the imposition of U.S. control over non-U.S. public spaces, 2) The exportation of a U.S. model of civil society “meaning its voluntary associations, social scientific knowledge, and civic spirit – in tandem with, if not ahead of, the country’s exports,” 3) the “power of norms-making” or the “rules of ‘best practice’ as spelled out by enterprising businessmen, civic leaders, and conscientious bureaucrats,” 4) the supposed egalitarianism of the consumerist ethos, where “sociability defined liberty as freedom of choice, privileged the marketplace and individual acquisitiveness as the means to access it, and tranquilly asserted that a vote in politics was not significantly different from making a choice in the market,” and 5) the “peaceableness” of common prosperity and the good life – defined as consumer abundance. All five features apply in full with respect to RI’s civic internationalism. Literature on “americanization” and the influence of U.S. popular culture, especially after World War II, is extensive. See, for example, Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, eds., *Here, There, and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000) and Rob Kroes, *If You’ve Seen One, You’ve Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> See Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, for consideration of a limited U.S. foreign policy apparatus during the interwar years using “chosen instruments” (private organizations and individuals) to effect policy goals.

<sup>32</sup> The starting point is Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream and Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900 – 1930*. Also, Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*; idem., *Global Community*; and idem., *The Globalizing of America, 1913 – 1945*, vol. 3, in *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Iriye argues that the NGOs and INGOs are the main contribution of the U.S. to the world over the course of the century in *Global Community*. Key texts on the history and role of the non-profit sector in the United States are

dissertation demonstrates how these three perspectives, in combination, begin to fill in the conceptual gaps in our historical understanding of international engagement between the United States and the world during the interwar period. From this three-pronged perspective, we can see the Granite City Rotarians depicting their own participation in

an expansive civil society that has continuously flourished beyond the territory and sovereignty of the United States, forming grids of action and interaction that both constituted the United States in a global space and entangled it in the history of globalization.<sup>33</sup>

Their own manner of participation came through RI's project of civic internationalism.

### **The Business of Empire**

The transnational networks of Rotary clubs were much more intricate than a simple U.S./non-U.S. dichotomy would allow, particularly before World War II. The circulation of ideas, practices, and norms among Rotarians transcended the U.S./non-U.S. divide as "fellow Rotarian" became a badge of international and gendered solidarity across specific class and some racial lines.<sup>34</sup> RI's civic internationalism encouraged the face-to-face interaction of individual businessmen as well as the sharing of new ideas on

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Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie, eds., *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (Cambridge, Eng., 2003); David C. Hammack, ed., *Making the Nonprofit Sector in the United States: A Reader* (Bloomington, 1998); and Kenneth Prewitt, Mattei Dogan, Steven Heydemann, and Stefan Toepler, eds. *The Legitimacy of Philanthropic Foundations: United States and European Perspectives* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006). See also Morag Bell, "American Philanthropy as Cultural Power," in Slater and Taylor, eds. *The American Century: Consensus and Coercion in the Projection of American Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 284 – 297 and Helmut K. Anheier and Siobhan Daly, "Philanthropic Foundations: A New Global Force?" *Global Civil Society 2004/5* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 158 – 176.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "Where in the World is America?": The History of the United States in the Global Age" in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 72 – 73.

<sup>34</sup> William I. Robinson and Jerry Harris, "Towards A Global Ruling Class? Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class," *Science & Society*, Vol. 64, No. 1, Spring 2000, 11 – 54 provides a seminal discussion of this issue from a postfordist perspective. While it is hard to determine to what degree RI contributed to the creation of "the transnational capitalist class," RI's civic internationalism did posit a kind of transnational class formation.

best practices, professional standards, and means of civic improvement. By 1930, it was perfectly normal for Japanese Rotarians to visit Australian Rotarians in their factories, for Mexican Rotarians to wine and dine Italian Rotarians on business trips, for Polish Rotarians to attend conferences hosted by Cuban Rotarians, and so on – all without direct reference to or guidance from U.S. Rotarians. In other words, participation in RI’s civic internationalism by non-U.S. clubs had already achieved global proportions by the advent of the Great Depression (the only period of sluggish growth in RI’s history until the 1990s).

In her examination of Rotary clubs in Germany before World War II, for example, Victoria de Grazia overlooks this fundamental reality in *Irresistible Empire*, resulting in a narrative dominated by a U.S./European dichotomy. The story of Rotary clubs in Cuba and Japan, to be explored in this dissertation, underscores this point. RI’s civic internationalism operated in the Pacific Rim, Latin America, and the Caribbean as much as across the North Atlantic. Furthermore, the U.S./European dichotomy, when reduced to Duluth, Minnesota vs. Dresden, Germany, reduces the U.S. side of the equation to a caricature of small-town, midwestern provincialism and the European side to the bourgeois anxieties of one important cultural center of Weimar Germany. This dissertation seeks to explode such dichotomies altogether by examining RI’s international engagement unbounded by specific geographical limits and/or set of political and cultural rivalries.<sup>35</sup>

Rotary’s civic internationalism served as a platform for such international engagement because membership in Rotary promised greater participation in an emerging

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<sup>35</sup> See Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, chapter 1, “The Service Ethic: How Bourgeois Men Made Peace with Babbitry.”

global economy. The emergence of transnational corporations and global transportation and communications networks entailed constant movement of personnel, commodities, and ideas.<sup>36</sup> In practice, Rotary clubs thrived on such movement, often partnering with specific corporations, professions, and industries for mutual support. Consequently, participation in the global economy and in one's Rotary club were often symbiotic, but particularly so for clubs outside the United States. The embrace of cultural pluralism within "the family of Rotary" – symbolized by the East Asian couple and the Indian Raja in the Granite City club's triptych – was counterbalanced by strong emphasis on business/professional credentials among its members. To be a Rotarian, one had to represent one's given profession and/or business to the club and to the community. In the name of intra-class harmony and equality, the original Chicago club built up its membership by guaranteeing each member his own uncontested niche or "classification" within the club: one dentist per club, one patent lawyer per club, one real estate agent per club, etc. The Chicago club's "classification principle" became a central part of Rotary's internationalist vision by World War I as equality of station across an entire spectrum of businesses, industries, and professions trumped, in theory, cultural and racial differences. Engineers in China, Czechoslovakia, Malaysia, and Canada were all professional peers – regardless of their specific national identity, religion, language – by virtue of their shared professional status.

These were what I label the exotic-peers of Rotary International: joined together through an imagined transnational subjectivity premised on an individual man's status

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<sup>36</sup> Still a seminal contribution on this point is Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds. Also, chapter 2 in *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

within the marketplace, within a given profession, within the local community. In fact, the celebration of exotic-peers in the world of Rotary hinged on this presumption of horizontal solidarity within the world of international business and drove the institution's inclusion of non-U.S. membership into its "parliament of businessmen." Membership across cultural and national differences entailed transformation of local elites into exotic-peers within RI's fold. When combined with a strong sense of fraternity – social equality of men among men – and social trusteeship of the local community, these cross-border class identities became a useful form of social capital for local businessmen and professionals on the move. Whether inside or outside the United States, membership had its privileges.<sup>37</sup>

But this dissertation challenges the category of "social capital" as the best way to approach this form of social interaction in a transnational context.<sup>38</sup> For all its claims to political neutrality, Rotary's civic internationalism expressed an idealized form of civil

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<sup>37</sup> Extensive debates over the nature of the relationship between the state and civil society continue to rage in the social sciences, with one side led by Theda Skocpol and the other by Robert Putnam on social capital. Some recent texts relevant to this study include Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman, OK; 2003) and Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington, 1999); Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson, "A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 3 (Sept 2000), 527 – 546; and Jocelyn Elise Crowley and Theda Skocpol, "The Rush to Organize: Explaining Associational Formation in the United States, 1860s – 1920s," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Oct 2001), 813 – 829. Publications in support of the social capital thesis are legion. Still the paramount texts are Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, 1993) and *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, 2000). See also Pamela Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success Since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006) for a more recent, comprehensive approach to U.S. history from this perspective. With respect to Rotary clubs, see also Gerald Gamm and Robert D. Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840 – 1940," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 29, Issue 4, Spring 1999, 511 – 557.

<sup>38</sup> "Social capital," as defined by Robert Putnam, "refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 19.

society emergent from and amenable to U.S. political and market cultures of the Progressive Era.<sup>39</sup> By institutional design, Rotary clubs were free to engage in whatever local forms of civic activism each club deemed most useful – from construction of new playgrounds and highways to public health initiatives, from boys’ camps to girls’ scholarship funds. In a sense, local clubs were imagined to be as autonomous as individual actors in the marketplace and as representative of the entire vocational spectrum of the marketplace. Yet, given RI’s rather strict parameters on class status across its membership rolls, the Rotary club in essence served as a gatekeeper for local commercial and professional elites by defining the boundaries of class status at the local level in very precise terms: each member joined the club under a specific “classification” within his profession and/or line of business that also required approval from RI’s headquarters. In effect, the form of citizenship participation posited by RI’s civic internationalism functioned as a subset of U.S. marketplace identities and therefore “as an instrument of social stratification.”<sup>40</sup> Social networking during a Rotary luncheon or social/civic event, in other words, served as a focal point for economic and political privilege and power.<sup>41</sup> Much more than the social glue necessary for civic engagement, social networking in Rotary clubs became opportunities for oversight by local economic

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<sup>39</sup> For a thorough analysis of the cultural dimensions of the marketplace over several centuries, see Thomas L. Haskell and Richard F. Teichgraber, eds., *The Culture of the Market: Historical Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Concord, Mass.: Pluto Press, 1992), 39. For an interesting analysis of service clubs, gender, and citizenship at the local level, see Emily J. Heard, “Gendered Notions of Citizenship and Service in Interwar Halifax,” PhD Diss., Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> For a thorough analysis of the theoretical weaknesses of social capital on this point, see Margaret R. Somers, “Beware Trojan Horses Bearing Social Capital: How Privatization Turned Solidarity into a Bowling Team,” in George Steinmetz, ed., *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 233 – 274 and idem., “Narrating and Naturalizing Civil Society and Citizenship Theory: The Place of Political Culture and the Public Sphere,” *Sociological Theory*, 13: 3, 229 – 274.

and political elites as well as any imperial power structures operating above and through them. Social networking in the local Rotary club was an institutional expression of privilege and means of control, but particularly so in commercial centers outside the United States and Western Europe where imperial relations were most manifest.

The possibility of engaging in a kind of global citizenship within the world of RI's civic internationalism amounted to what one scholar has called "the politics of recognition" within a system of U.S. cultural and economic imperialism.<sup>42</sup> Although promised full participation in RI's "parliament of businessmen," the exotic-peers of RI moved in a set of social relations embedded in economic and political hierarchies often defined by the United States and/or European empires. Consequently, Rotary clubs outside the United States were never just venues for social gatherings and bowling teams; rather, they were expressions of political and economic power BOTH locally and internationally. Despite all claims of benevolent inclusion, RI's civic internationalism offered up models of civil society and citizenship bleached of genuine political import; delimited by boundaries of class, race, and gender; and increasingly vulnerable to changing U.S. economic and political interests. Except in celebration of the power to

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<sup>42</sup> Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 18. In addition to Kramer and monographs on U.S. empire given above (footnote #14), see also Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004) as well as four important anthologies on U.S. empire, including Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); and Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).



include distant lands and peoples within the gentle orbit of American trade and civilization, Rotary generally avoided overt reference to racial identities after 1919. Though the terrible nexus of race and empire was operative in Rotary clubs, RI's understanding of citizenship was so entrenched in market relations that the exclusions of race and empire functioned in subtler, more pernicious ways.<sup>43</sup> Just as the generation of racial difference was crucial to the construction of the hierarchies of empire, so the universal promise of inclusion was to the denial of empire. The dynamics of racial hierarchy and class distinction worked in tandem. The social capital forged in hundreds of Rotary clubs worldwide entailed much more than the camaraderie of a bowling league: it was the substance of an imperial system in all but name.

There are reasons why one cannot produce a map of the United States as an empire. There is no geo-body for an informal empire.<sup>44</sup> But hierarchies of sovereignty do not require territorial expression. RI's ability to collapse the distance between U.S. and non-U.S. cities served in the de-territorialization of U.S. cultural and economic power by enabling "the replacement of European by American global power in the twentieth century...and a replacement of Old World territorial inheritances by the New World rule of moral and economic principle."<sup>45</sup> The "American Century" scripted the United States as a non-spatial, atemporal nation able to press universal and moral claims of global

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<sup>43</sup> Kramer distinguishes between competing forms of exceptionalism in debates over the future of the U.S. as a potential empire after 1898, calling them "national-exceptionalism" vs the "racial-exceptionalism." Paul Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880 – 1910," *The Journal of American History*, 88: 4, (March 2002), 1315 – 1353.

<sup>44</sup> On the definition of the term "geo-body," see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

leadership: the heart and soul of the denial of empire in the United States.<sup>46</sup> In parallel manner, RI's transnational network of private service clubs invited local business and professional elites into the fold without reference to U.S. political ambitions. Informal networks of business and professional peers meeting on a theoretically level playing field of “free markets” were not exactly redolent of colonial administrations. RI’s managerial worldview did not require such formal hierarchies of imperial power. Yet the power to invite some also meant the power to exclude others. The power of the local Rotary club to credential some as “representative members of the business and professional community” meant others not making the cut. RI’s civic internationalism promised a future of international peace through greater solidarity and civic-mindedness among the world’s business and professional classes – the new managers of an emerging global economy. To unmask the egalitarian and humanitarian conceits of RI’s civic internationalism, therefore, is to interrogate the denial of empire in the United States in a period of global ascendancy.

As a form of Wilsonianism without the state, RI helped reconfigure the national mission of the United States from reluctant world power to righteous world leader through its engagement with and inclusion of their counterparts outside the U.S. RI’s success both inside and outside the U.S. helped pave the way for a much more active role for the United States in the world after World War II. More than a holding pattern of private sector diplomacy until the emergence of the national security state and its concomitant policies and institutions in the early cold war, the international endeavors of

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<sup>46</sup> For David Harvey, Henry Luce’s famous phrase “the American century” was key to U.S. denial of empire because “the power conferred was global and universal rather than territorially specific, so Luce preferred to talk of an American century rather than an empire.” David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 50.

RI and many other INGOs between the wars developed important continuities in U.S./non-U.S. contact and exchange that ultimately bridged those two world wars. But RI's own rootedness in international market relations, embrace of cultural internationalism, and global scale of operations distinguished it as an INGO. When Henry Luce challenged his fellow Americans in 1941 "to accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world," his words would have sounded all too familiar to the Rotarians of Granite City, Illinois and their 140,000+ fellow U.S. Rotarians.<sup>47</sup> For them and for another 60,000+ Rotarians throughout the world, Luce was not a prophet. He was stating the obvious.

Chapter one traces out the evolution of the Rotary club from a social networking device for Chicago businessmen in 1905 into a national organization simultaneously branching out into Canada, Europe, the Pacific Rim, and Latin America after 1912. The emergence of Rotary's "service ideology" drove its own brand of business progressivism as the organization developed its gendered, managerial approach to community service. Rotary's strategic uses of its non-profit, non-state status found expression in many forms of community service both inside and outside the United States. But Rotary clubs built their entire internationalist vision around a managerial worldview akin to President Wilson's. Though religious in tone, Rotary's civic internationalism emerged as a secular, businessman's version of a civilizing mission performed outside the state. In the absence of any Wilsonian style of foreign policy and strong diplomatic infrastructure, Rotary clubs flourished during the interwar period.

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," in Michael J. Hogan, ed., *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the 'American Century'* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 20.

Chapter two treats the Wichita Rotary club as a case study in the Wichitans' boosterism at all levels: local to national to international. Placing them in the midst of U.S. business progressivism during 1910s, the chapter explores the Wichita club's many attempts to position their city prominently in national and international markets through promotions, publications, and community service activities. The transformation of Wichita's economy into a hub for the aviation industry drove the Wichita Rotarians' conceptions of international engagement.

The history of the Tokyo club in chapter 3 demonstrates that Japanese Rotarians could also be deliberate about developing their business contacts with the rest of the world through their networking in RI. Working in a parallel fashion with the Wichita Rotarians, the Tokyo club promoted itself and its nation in the world of RI through its own brand of civic internationalism. Over time, the Tokyo Rotarians' high level of standing in Japanese industry and commerce meant close affiliation with Japanese imperial expansionism into East Asia and ultimately the closure of all clubs by 1940 as the U.S. and Japan moved toward conflict.

In tandem, chapters two and three evidence as well the unintended consequences and unimaginable horrors of other forms of international engagement. RI's civic internationalism proved no more capable of preventing war than the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. In fact, it helped build the institutional and ideological foundations for postwar U.S. global hegemony by blending the denial of empire with the business of empire. RI's civic internationalism, in short, had its violent, dark side. In the end, Rotarians were private businessmen seeking economic growth and citizens of their country first and foremost.

RI's institutional position as a non-state, non-profit organization opened doors for the U.S. business and professional classes in cities throughout the world and then promised reciprocity. Chapters three and four examine these processes through the particular experiences of Japanese and Cuban Rotarians, tracing out two very different national trajectories before World War II that, nevertheless, arrived at similar endpoints: economic, political, cultural, and military subjugation by the United States in the early cold war. The Rotary clubs of Havana and Tokyo, followed by their many satellite cities/clubs, played out in microcosm the gradual encroachments of U.S. influence in those very different cities and nations over the interwar years. Particularly in the case of Havana, the incorporation of business and professional elites into U.S. ways of doing business, organizing civil society, and defining themselves in a globalizing economy represented powerful forms of cultural and economic imperialism in all but name. Despite the promises of full participation through RI's civic internationalism, the Cuban Rotarians found themselves at the mercy of U.S. corporate and national interests.

Chapter five investigates the same processes of incorporation during the long journey of Jim and Lillian Dow Davidson through most of Asia from 1928 to 1931. How Jim Davidson managed to recruit Rotarians in cities, nations, regions, and empires far removed from the American heartland provides a picture of how RI's civic internationalism operated in practice over a large amount of space and a variety of contexts rather than in one place over a long period of time (Tokyo and Havana). Meanwhile, Lillian Davidson popularized their travels and Jim's successful establishment of Rotary clubs through regular dispatches in RI's international monthly, *The Rotarian*. Her mediation of Jim's mission, laced with the exotica of world travel, made the world

accessible for her mostly middlebrow readers. Together, the Davidsons forged deeper ties between the heartland and the abroad through Jim's selling of RI's civic internationalism to the business and professional elites of key Asian cities and Lillian's recounting of the lands and peoples of Asia in a friendly, homespun manner. The Davidsons' travels encapsulated well RI's civic internationalism: it was a friendly world for America.

## **Chapter 1: “Cooperation Among Gentlemen”: Wilsonianism, Boosterism, and the Service Ideology**

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Ever since we were born as a nation we have undertaken to be the champions of humanity and the rights of men.... America is now going to be called out into international position such as she never has occupied before.

Woodrow Wilson, 1913.<sup>48</sup>

It is a far cry from these original and perhaps local objectives mainly commercial in their aspects, to the present aims and objectives of world-wide fellowship among business and professional men of all races and creeds.

The history of the Atlanta Rotary Club, 1939.<sup>49</sup>

### **Introduction**

In June of 1918 in Kansas City, Arch Klumph addressed a convention hall crammed with several thousand fellow Rotarians regarding the Great War in Europe. As head of the I.A.R.C. the year prior, Klumph was in essence giving his valediction. His concerns stretched well into the future.

How can all further danger of war be averted? By what means can a universal and permanent peace based on righteousness be established and maintained? To my mind, there are two ways in which we may at least endeavor to preserve world-wide peace. One is by force of arms, the other by friendship . . .<sup>50</sup> Arch Klumph then answered his own question with the words of another president – Woodrow Wilson:

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<sup>48</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), 261 and 278.

<sup>49</sup> Ivan Allen, *Rotary in Atlanta: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Atlanta: Darby, 1939), Club Constitution, Article III, Section 1, “Membership Qualifications,” 27, and note at end of membership list from 1913, written in 1939, 38.

<sup>50</sup> Arch C. Klumph. “Rotary Throughout the World.” Pamphlet from 1918 Convention of National Association of Rotary Clubs, Kansas City, Missouri. The Archives of Rotary International, Evanston, Illinois. (Hereafter, RI Archives.)

The only cement that will hold this world together will be the cement of friendship. Mere agreements may not make peace secure. It will be absolutely necessary that a force be created as a guarantor of the permanency of the settlement....

The right state of mind, the right feeling between nations is as necessary for a lasting peace as is the just settlement of questions of territory, or of racial and national allegiance.

The free, constant, unthreatened intercourse of nations is an essential part of the process of peace and of development.<sup>51</sup>

Mr. Klumph waxed eloquent over Wilson's vision of world peace and international cooperation through a "cement of friendship" that transcended nation-state diplomacy and power politics.

To Klumph, it was such a glowing model for world unity that he went further by linking Wilson's vision of world peace with the mission of his own organization:

Therefore, I ask what agency greater than international treaties by governments, can assure the world of a permanent peace; can assure the weak and lowly nations that the great and mighty will not suddenly pounce upon them and crush out their life's ambitions?

I can see but one answer. It is the establishment of a great international friendship – the worldwide inoculation of the virus [of war] by the principle of *Service, not Self*.<sup>52</sup>

By way of example, Klumph recalled how he had recently gone to Havana, Cuba to help establish the first Rotary club outside of North America and Great Britain. He concluded from that experience that "the international feature of Rotary [was] its greatest asset."

How deep and durable was this alliance of Wilsonian faith in collective security with the service club ideals of Rotary? Wilson believed that international peace and security were something beyond the capacities of any one nation and Klumph seemed to be taking President Wilson at his word by challenging his fellow club members to heed Wilson's

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<sup>51</sup> Klumph, "Rotary Throughout the World," n.p.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



call as *an international organization* in furthering that peace and security. Rotary clubs sought to apply their own Wilsonian vision of international engagement by forging a middle ground between particular nations and transnational corporations. Hundreds of Rotary clubs scattered throughout North America and the United Kingdom in 1918 were struggling to carve out their own organizational space among multiple layers of states and markets. Though eager enough to serve the wartime needs of the “Allied Nations” and work through corporate agents and networks in an *ad hoc* manner, Rotarians like Klumph envisioned clubs in “all commercial centers of the world” as an effective way of fulfilling Wilson’s call for international peace and security once the war had come to an end. By virtue of their international credentials as well as their non-state/non-profit status, the clubs were to be the stuff of Wilson’s “international friendship” after the war to end all wars.

Transcending international borders coupled with the blurring of the public/private divide would prove a powerful engine for the spread of Rotary clubs both inside and outside the United States after World War I. More significantly, Rotary’s civic internationalism evolved into an ideological project that, first, centered on both “community service” and international engagement during the interwar period and, second, contributed to the Wilsonian conceit of the United States as a new kind of world power capable of inaugurating “a universal and permanent peace based on righteousness.” RI’s civic internationalism, in short, proved more than a helpful companion to the Wilsonian vision of international peace. In significant ways, Klumph’s Rotary clubs succeeded where Wilsonianism failed.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The literature on Woodrow Wilson and “Wilsonianism” is extensive. For a compelling case for the continuities of Wilsonianism over the course of the twentieth-century, see Frank Ninkovich,

### **“Service is the basis of all business”**

A review of the origins of the Chicago Rotary club and its brand of business progressivism can demonstrate the overlap between Wilsonianism and RI’s civic internationalism. Early in 1905, a young lawyer named Paul Harris convinced three friends and business associates – an engineer, a tailor, and a coal dealer – to start a luncheon club that rotated among the members’ places of business in Chicago’s loop or downtown business district.<sup>54</sup> The purpose of the meetings was to overcome the sense of alienation the four men were experiencing in the urban chaos so foreign to their small home towns, to establish a network of contacts with whom they could exchange business, and to learn about each other’s line of work. The Chicago Rotary club sought to distinguish itself from the broad range of competing fraternal organizations, private social clubs, secret societies, and voluntary associations throughout Chicago by emphasizing in particular the many social opportunities it provided for making business contacts among

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*The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For the consequences of Wilsonian rhetoric in the international arena, Erez Manela, “Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919,” *American Historical Review*, 111: 5, 1327 – 1351 and idem, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also Lloyd C. Gardner, *A Covenant with Power: America and World Order from Wilson to Reagan* (London: Macmillan, 1984); Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1991); idem., *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); David M. Esposito, *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson: American War Aims in World War I* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996); Ross A. Kennedy, Woodrow Wilson, “World War I, and an American Conception of National Security,” *Diplomatic History*, 25: 1, 1 – 31; and Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Hence, the name “Rotary,” referring to this rotation of venue and to the expectation that club membership and leadership were on a rolling basis, subject to constant review and turnover.

its members. An early membership promotional circular trumpeted this distinction: “Other clubs frown down any effort on the part of members to use the club as a means for securing business.... What is done sub-rosa in other clubs is here done openly – a part and parcel of the club’s work.”<sup>55</sup> Harris’s club showed little patience for the niceties of business decorum of the day. Instead, if economic success depended on greater sales, and sales upon conflating one’s social and business circles, then what purpose was there in soft-pedaling the matter? For two years, the Chicago club grew to include over a hundred members due to “a hunger on the part of isolated business and professional men for the friendships and warm personal contacts so largely denied to them in the work-a-day world in which they lived, and a desire to promote their own businesses and professions by exchanging orders, contracts, and patronage among themselves.”<sup>56</sup> Harris’s simple formula worked, and a vibrant luncheon club in the heart of Chicago’s business district was born. The first Rotary club was very much a child of its hometown, “the windy city.”

A critical turn came in 1907, when the club brought together representatives from numerous civic, religious, social, and business organizations to meet with key city and public health officials in order to create public comfort stations in Chicago. Given the lack of public restrooms in the chaotic streets of downtown Chicago, city residents and visitors had to resort to entering private establishments such as department stores and saloons. As a matter of public safety, the latter option was of particular concern to women and those men who sought to protect them from such dens of iniquity. At the same time, the corruption of the Chicago police department and malfeasance of the city

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<sup>55</sup> From a membership promotion circular (1907 – 08) reprinted in The University of Chicago Social Science Survey Committee, *Rotary? A University Group Looks at the Rotary Club of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Rotary?*, p. 73.

government on the matter further provoked the original Rotarians into their first concerted action on behalf of Chicago.<sup>57</sup> The success of the club's drive for comfort stations only strengthened the growing awareness of the value of blending business networking with activities and discourses on "public improvement." As a result, a new objective appeared in the Chicago club's constitution in 1907: "The advancement of the best interests of Chicago and the spreading of the spirit of civic pride and loyalty among its citizens."<sup>58</sup> In orchestrating the public forum, the Chicago Rotary club played host to a veritable tableau of Progressive Era politics – but for the lack of any women speaking.

That a concern for the safety of women triggered a public forum that precluded the input of women revealed much about the Chicago Rotarians' gendered conceptions of the public sphere, expertise, and professionalism. The "advancement of the best interests of Chicago" was a matter for the city fathers – those men with the economic and technical wherewithal to improve (and gain from) urban infrastructure and the moral rectitude to fight corruption in city hall. In other words, the need for public comfort stations was a commercial problem in need of a technical solution by professionals from both the public and private sectors. Shorn of overt sentimental dimensions of uplift, the club's activities in the name of community service and public improvement, as a result, did not require formal membership of women in Rotary. Professionals, managers, technicians, and public officials were and ought to be men of a certain class. Yet, given the moral as well as civic dimensions of such public projects, the increasing emphasis on community service and philanthropic activities called for a strict policing of the gender barriers between the public worlds of business and the private worlds of domesticity. In

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<sup>57</sup> "Loud Demand for Comfort Booths," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 October 1907, 4.

<sup>58</sup> See "The history of the 'Object of Rotary'," index files, RI Archives.

short, the encroachment of professional and business men into the feminine domain of the charitable came at a price – the disallowance of women altogether, except as domestic partners attending special social events. The Chicago Rotarians’ subsequent entrance into Progressive political agendas demonstrated that businessmen did, in fact, care about their city and their homes as well as their own business interests. Men of business and the professions could “serve” their community without gendered anxiety because the marginalization of the status of women within the club guaranteed the manliness of their newfound “social trusteeship.”<sup>59</sup>

Within a few years, the core of RI’s formal set of institutional objectives developed into the overarching theme of “service” – to the club, to the community, to one’s own business or profession, and to international peace. Although the original club in Chicago made no secret of its focus on profiting from networking with fellow club members, the club’s rapid evolution into the National Association of Rotary Clubs in 1910 (N.A.R.C.) and then the International Association in 1912 (I.A.R.C.) reflected broad national trends in the growth and development of the new middle classes of urban America and the emergence of a national, corporate culture.<sup>60</sup> At the first convention of

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<sup>59</sup> On this phrase in this context, see Steven Brint, *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and for a comprehensive history of the original Rotary club of Chicago, Oren Arnold, *The Golden Strand: An Informal History of the Rotary Club of Chicago* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966).

<sup>60</sup> Still classic texts on the subject, Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877 – 1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967) and idem., *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962). See also Robert D. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jeffrey M. Hornstein, *A Nation of Realtors: A Cultural History of the Twentieth-Century American Middle Class* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston, eds., *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class* (New York: Routledge, 2001) and especially Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and*

Rotary clubs in Chicago in 1910, the first general secretary, Chesley Perry of Chicago, made clear where he and his fellow Rotarians stood in the political economy of the United States, and where he envisioned them in the near future:

We are here in all the vigor of our manhood ready to do our part of the world's work, anxious to have a share in the great civic uplift of our day and desirous of establishing and maintaining the highest business standards.... Already there are sixteen clubs represented in this National Association with a total membership of nearly three thousand and with a combined capitalization of the business interests represented of upwards of \$300,000,000, but there are in the United States exactly fifty cities with a population of 100,000 or more....<sup>61</sup>

Perry merged the masculinity of the clubs' members with the "capitalization of the business interests" they represented and their involvement in civic reforms. For Perry, progressive politics was a function of individual masculine initiative, private wealth, and corporate power. But most revealing was his vision of what that combination meant on a national scale and how Rotary could tap into it as a new organization. Perry sensed that neither the secrecy and ritual of the fraternal lodges nor the sobriety and decorum of the elite social clubs would fit with the assertive middle-class camaraderie of his fellow Rotarians and their turn toward both professionalism and community service.

For Perry and the earliest Rotarians, that translated into a significant opportunity. At the same Chicago convention, Daniel Cady, a New York attorney, announced that: "The Rotary idea includes all that is meant by the new business conscience and progressive business methods. It brings together people who desire to deal honestly,... It is cooperation among gentlemen. It believes, with Robert Owen, that if a transaction

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*Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982) and Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870 – 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>61</sup> *Chicago Convention Proceedings*, 15 – 17 August 1910, reprinted in *The National Rotarian*, September 1910, 13 – 14.

does not show a profit to both parties, it is immoral.”<sup>62</sup> Another conventioneer suggested that “a certificate of membership bearing the official seal of the National Rotary Club be issued to members in good standing as a traveling passport from one city to another, whereby the member may be recognized...” Another Rotarian then amplified the point: “...it would mean much to those of us who are manufacturers or jobbers to feel that there was somebody in each of the various centers who was really vouched for in the way that a Rotary Club man is. It means a great deal, and I can’t help feeling that this is the beginning of an era of business... and we can all understand among ourselves that good service means good standing.”<sup>63</sup> In need of greater legitimacy and public trust at the height of the Progressive Era, businessmen from coast to coast were turning to the respectability of a professional identity combined with a formal dedication to public service as a kind of anti-corruption discourse.<sup>64</sup> The fifteen Rotary clubs represented at

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<sup>62</sup> *Chicago Convention Proceedings*, 15 – 17 August 1910, reprinted in *The National Rotarian*, September 1910, 45. Also quoted in Arnold, *The Golden Strand*, 39. Interestingly, Arnold, a Rotarian himself, redacted the reference to Robert Owen in his quotation.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 43 – 45.

<sup>64</sup> This was a very common theme in Rotary publications out of Chicago and London. Arthur F. Sheldon, at the 1911 Portland national convention, first coined the motto “He profits most who serves best”. On the origins of the emphasis on “service” from Arthur F. Sheldon, see “Members, Sheldon Arthur F.”, Box 73, folder 3, Chicago Rotary/One Archives, Chicago IL. There are numerous articles in *The Rotarian* from 1912 onward; in particular, see articles under the heading “Salesmanship – Science Plus Art,” *The Rotarian*, June 1915, 91 - 96. See also “The Philosophy and Ethics of Successful Business: An Extract from the Buffalo Convention Address,” *The Rotarian*, September 1913, 113 and “The Ideal of Service as the Basis of All Worthy Enterprise” and “Perpetuating the Ideal of Service to Humanity” in Central Files/Subject Files, Pamphlets, RI Archives. On service as a “profitless ideal,” see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, 1993), esp. chapter 5, and Emily Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900 – 1930* (Cambridge, Mass; 1999). On the rise of salesmen as respectable professionals, see Walter Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Cambridge, Mass, 2004), esp. chap. 6. On the cross-class nature of lodges and the transition to service clubs, see Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, 1989). One could make a compelling argument that the service ideology forged in the service clubs (Lions and Kiwanis included after WWI) was the middle-class parallel to the philanthropy of magnates like Rockefeller, Mellon, and Carnegie. In 1917, in fact, this became a central

the first convention in 1910 were a crystallization of this process, incorporating the encouragement “of civic pride and loyalty” and the promotion of “progressive and honorable business methods” into their first formal constitution.<sup>65</sup>

The service ideology of Rotary and the rise of the new middle classes were all of a piece, with the rehabilitation of the public image of corporate capitalism as the point of contact. The forging of a business conscience in popular culture, political discourse, and the world of business itself was as much a central component in the rationalization of market relations during the Progressive Era as it was in the evolution of Rotary’s service ideology.<sup>66</sup> Glenn C. Mead, the first president of the International Association of Rotary Clubs in 1912 – 13, put the moment into historical perspective for all those attending that year’s convention in Buffalo:

Commodore Vanderbilt expressed the autocratic attitude of business years ago by the blunt and defiant phrase, ‘The public be damned.’ A less truculent but equally insulting observation revealed the business philosophy and practice of Barnum when he exclaimed ‘The people like to be humbugged.’ It is a far cry from the days when those ideas characterized business methods to our own era that has accepted the doctrine of social service and made all business, great or small, realize that its real function is serving mankind. The tables have been turned...and the public may no longer be damned or humbugged by corporations, captains of industry, or small dealers.<sup>67</sup>

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argument in favor of creating the Rotary Foundation and then expanding it greatly by the mid-1930s. After World War II, the Rotary Foundation became more and more the centerpiece of Rotary’s mission.

<sup>65</sup> The fifteen clubs represented, in order of their entrance into the National Association, were: Chicago; San Francisco in 1908; Oakland, Seattle, Los Angeles, New York City, and Boston in 1909; Tacoma, Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis, New Orleans, Kansas City, Lincoln, and Portland in 1910. Though Detroit had just established a new club, they did not send a delegate to the first convention. *The Chicago Tribune*, “Rotary Clubs of America Meet in Chicago Tomorrow,” 14 August 1910, 7.

<sup>66</sup> See Richard L. McCormick, “The Discovery that Business Corrupts Politics: A Reappraisal of the Origins of Progressivism,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (April 1981), 247 – 274 for a cogent analysis of this point.

<sup>67</sup> *Proceedings of the Buffalo Convention*, “Report of President Glenn C. Mead,” reprinted in *The Rotarian*, September 1913, 20.



For Mead, any chance at reviving the respectability of business in public opinion depended on creating a sense of rupture between the charlatans and “Bourbon methods of business” of the prior century and the modern, scientific, and socially responsible business methods of the new order. “If righteousness exalteth a nation, surely this bloodless revolution in business that has taught it the wholesome lesson of social service and that morality and business *must* mix, is an epoch in history.”<sup>68</sup>

What drove Mead’s Rotarians into the arms of public service was a pre-emptive move at avoiding impending state regulation of business practices and gaining ground at the expense of “big business.” Citing the San Antonio club’s suggestion that “business men should establish a code of ethics just as the professions have done,” Mead intoned against the “evil practices that . . . bring disrepute and public scorn upon the whole body of business men” and warned that “they should not wait for compulsion from outside their ranks.” Given the turn of political fortunes in the elections of 1912, Mead’s advice made sense. Becoming professional in one’s business methods and serving the public represented both a necessity and an opportunity.

As with many other organizations and initiatives that emerged during the same period, Rotary clubs became useful vehicles in legitimizing the managerial and masculine authority of the new middle class professionals and businessmen in state, economic, and local affairs. The Rotary club’s membership was supposed to be an assembly of all the “representative men of the community” who bore some mark of character and success in the marketplace. The impetus for growth in the original Chicago club was to maximize the degree of harmony (and potential clients) among club members by opening

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 21.

membership to “all worthy and dignified vocations,” but allowing only one representative from each distinct line of business or profession within the club. Members of Rotary clubs, theoretically, represented their specific business or profession before the club since, once they occupied a given “classification,” no one else in that line of work could enter the club. If a man sold bricks in Chicago and no one held that “classification” in the club, for example, he would be a possible candidate to join the club under that specific classification. If the club already had a member who sold bricks at least 60% of the time, then there was no possibility of membership until the specific classification was vacated. The Chicago Rotarians, in fact, actually maintained statistics on how much business was gained by whom and from whom from 1908 to 1911 as they tried to demonstrate the profitability of such an arrangement.

As a result, for the most common professions and businesses in a large city like Chicago, membership in a Rotary club could be a profitable piece of social and economic real estate. Moreover, an expanding economy entailed a growing number of possible “classifications.” And with so many cities without a Rotary club across the United States, the potential for growth within clubs as well as nationally was self-evident to mobile, enterprising businessmen in need of instant business credentials. The portability and interconnectedness of Rotarians’ professional/business lives translated into the success of the Chicago service club model in other cities.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> For a detailed review of how the Chicago Rotary club began its national expansion first into the Bay area of California and then spread through business ties within the Traveler’s Insurance Company, see William J. Mountin, *History of the Rotary Club of San Francisco* (San Francisco: The Rotary Club of San Francisco, 1940); *The History of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rotary Club of Los Angeles, 1955); *Rotarily Yours: A History of the Rotary Club of Oakland* (Oakland: Rotary Club of Oakland, 1969); and the *Seattle Rotary’s Golden Years: The History of Rotary Club Number Four* (Seattle: Rotary Club of Seattle, 1960).

When the National Association of Rotary clubs met in 1911 for its second convention in Portland, Oregon, however, the “backscratching” model of limited membership and maximum profits was already not in tune with the times. Purely acquisitive individualism in the marketplace being at its nadir in U.S. political and popular culture, the “classification principle” of membership evolved into a much grander purpose: “The Rotary Club demands fair dealing, honest methods, and high standards of business. No obligation, actual or implied, to influence business exists in Rotary.... Membership in the Rotary Club is a privilege and an opportunity and its responsibility demands honest, and efficient service and thoughtfulness for one’s fellows. Service is the basis of all business.”<sup>70</sup> More precisely, business was the basis of all “service.” The service ideology was deeply embedded in the market and professional status of its members. The chance to engage in community service through one’s local Rotary club was defined as a function of masculine character, an expression of old-fashioned republican virtue and civic cooperation. The institution, though, only recognized each member through his own economic standing within the marketplace and prowess in social networking.

Because public service came only through private means, the headquarters of Rotary in Chicago had already begun to work out increasingly elaborate systems of classification for specific lines of business and professions by 1912 -13. The strategy soon developed into a detailed way of documenting the credentials of each potential member’s social and economic status, a kind of “scientized” vetting process of the ranks of the new middle classes, often as they first made their appearance. Eventually, the

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<sup>70</sup> “The Rotary Platform: Adopted by Rotary Conventions Portland 1911 and Duluth 1912,” from *Pamphlet No. 1: The Rotary Club*, RI Archives.

credentialing of new members became a core practice of Rotary clubs, evolving into an intricate set of institutional and cultural practices for membership certification well before World War I.<sup>71</sup> By 1922, Rotary arrived at a formal definition of membership requirements that each club's committee on membership and classification had to follow: "Any adult male person of good character and good business reputation, engaged as proprietor, partner, corporation officer, or manager, of any worthy and recognized business."<sup>72</sup> Beyond these parameters, each club had a great deal of autonomy.

The credentialing of new members, in fact, could provide a quick entrée for highly mobile businessmen in new cities, so long as they met the formal requirements for membership and there was an opening for that classification in the club. For instance, the Atlanta Rotary club, formed in 1913, was established after the attendance of three members of the Atlanta chapter of the American Association of Advertising Clubs at their annual convention in Baltimore. The new club drew its membership from many in the business community who were not from Atlanta or even Georgia. As a result, by 1938, only forty members, or 15% of the Atlanta Rotary club, were native to that city, only three of its first twenty-six club presidents had been from Atlanta, and over thirty-two states and four countries (Canada, England, Scotland, and Belgium) were represented.<sup>73</sup> Restrictions on club membership, in short, could actually entail professional opportunities for businessmen setting up shop in new venues. For others, like Rotary's president Mead, "the limitation of membership establish[ed] a high standard

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<sup>71</sup> This was also one of the most significant structural differences between Rotary clubs and its imitators, the Lions and Kiwanis clubs, which did not have such restrictions on membership. Each Rotary club had to have committees on membership and classification which examined any potential member's personal as well as professional/business credentials.

<sup>72</sup> See standard club constitution, Article II, Section 1.

<sup>73</sup> Allen, *Rotary in Atlanta*, 280.

of business discussion at club meetings. A heavy responsibility rests upon a man ... to show a mastery and knowledge of his business in presenting it to his fellow-members. He cannot afford to offer an inexpert or slovenly exposition of that business in which he is accredited with leadership....” The weekly club meeting was, in its loftiest form, a series of “business talks” which are “as valuable and scientific as lectures at a university...and very appropriately named a post-graduate course in business.”<sup>74</sup> Since there were only a few business schools in existence in 1913, along with a high degree of change and mobility within many industries and professions, the weekly “parliament of businessmen” provided some measure of stability and authority among the ranks of the new managers and professionals of corporate America as they made their appearances among the older professions and established small businessmen of any given U.S. city.

Glenn Mead himself understood well the politics behind the professionalization of business at both the local and national level. Though a product of the “common schools” of Pennsylvania, he managed to enter Phillips Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire and attend Harvard, where he graduated in 1891. While teaching the classics at the Episcopal Academy in Philadelphia, Mead studied law and became a member of the bar in 1900. He entered local politics under the tutelage of Judge James Gay Gordon, “a leading lawyer and public man” of Philadelphia and opened up his own practice in 1908. As an independent Republican, he agitated for urban reforms, achieving success in the 1911 elections in Philadelphia and becoming Assistant City Solicitor. In 1910, he organized and then became president of the Philadelphia Rotary club. During his two years as club president, Mead raised the profile of Rotary in Philadelphia to a level comparable to the

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<sup>74</sup> *Proceedings of the Buffalo Convention*, “Report of President Glenn C. Mead,” reprinted in *The Rotarian*, September 1913, 21.

“older business organizations” of the city.<sup>75</sup> In terms of education, mobility, and opportunity, Mead’s entire career reflected the burgeoning opportunities of the new middle classes of the period, culminating in his personal challenge to Rotarians to develop and propagate a “professional code of ethics” for all businessmen.

In contrast to the specificity of vocational roles within clubs, the various charitable projects and community activities taken on by local clubs, however, never had any particular plan or coherence within the United States until the mid-1920s. Given the relatively large degree of autonomy on the part of the local clubs, this was no surprise. Due to the broad range of projects and activities taken up by clubs both inside and outside the U.S., in fact, there was a push by World War I to distinguish acceptable community service activities from uncoordinated, *ad hoc* club activities done in the name of the public good.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the experimental nature of community projects in the first decades of Rotary’s existence, the community activities did have two common denominators. The first common ground centered on charity and philanthropy. Clubs often involved themselves in fundraising for the community chest, “crippled children,” building new playgrounds and parks or else supporting and mentoring through the Boy Scouts, student loan funds, and organizations like the 4-H clubs and the YMCA. Work with Boy Scouts, in fact, had become one of the most common projects of Rotary clubs in the U.S. during the interwar period. Particular interest in the Boy Scouts of America stemmed from many Rotarians’ view that such activities offered tutelage in the ways of citizenship for future

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<sup>75</sup> *The Rotarian*, September 1912, “President Glenn C. Mead,” 14.

<sup>76</sup> University of Chicago, *Rotary?*, chapter X, “Civic Leadership,” 221 – 247. See also, Resolution 34 from the St. Louis convention in 1923 and countless pamphlets published on “community service” after 1915 by Rotary’s publishing arm in Chicago.

generations of men. Clubs were supposed to forge this kind of interlocking relationship with other community organizations, both public and private, and to meet social needs unfulfilled by any other local group, organization, or agency. (The teeth on the outside of the gear of Rotary's emblem is said to symbolize the efficient interlocking of the club with all other community organizations such as those listed above.)

The other common theme centered on economic and civic improvements. Better traffic regulation, fire protection, and zoning laws were typical as well as support for public works and the creation of chambers of commerce where none existed. Though not quite as common as charitable endeavors like fresh air camps and aid to underprivileged children, this latter type of community outreach emphasized a streamlined municipal government, more efficient management of public resources, improvement of public health facilities, and development of transportation and communications infrastructure.<sup>77</sup> They were typical projects of the Progressive Era in both form and rhetoric. But RI's reform efforts in particular tended to focus on face-to-face charity projects and especially on the inculcation of boys into good adult male citizens; while the construction of roads, parks, hospitals, swimming pools, and playgrounds were generally seen as secondary but significant priorities. Given their mixture of sociability, boosterism, and republicanism, Rotary clubs gravitated toward meeting social needs that were personal and local rather than overtly political and systemic. Community service projects, in other words, tended to reflect the individualist ethos of classic liberalism and the traditional dichotomy of the deserving/undeserving poor.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 224 – 225 in particular.

But for all its moral connotations, neither type of community service activity challenged any political or social inequalities in any significant way. And this was by tacit design. As with many other measures put forth by Progressives, the real objectives of reform were about the defense of what were seen as traditional middle-class, republican values in the midst of rapid social and economic change. The cooperative model of club sociability among business and professional equals privileged intra-class harmony over all else. As a result, community service could only be conceived in apolitical terms. Moral uplift, individual charity, and civic improvement pervaded club projects and rhetoric without direct reference to the inequitable social and economic relationships responsible for the need for such charities. The middle-class philanthropy of RI, once bleached of the political, could only reinforce rather than challenge power relations at any level of governance.

Much like Wilson's own vision of international peace, RI's use of the term "service" was loaded with contradictions from the start. The origins and evolution of the service ideology reveal its primary purpose of grafting the profit motive of managerial capitalism onto the rhetoric of democratic engagement, social equality, and civic cooperation. That the service club made the latter dependent on the former, however, did not merit consideration any more than the equation of democracy with capitalism did in the rhetoric of U.S. foreign policy and Wilson's dream of a League of Nations. Long before the advent of the Great Depression, debates within Rotary clubs over the nature and responsibilities of capitalism in a democratic society, and club activities that evolved in response to those debates, had developed into an international discourse thanks to the simultaneous expansion of Rotary clubs across the United States and outside the U.S. as



well. By the mid-1930s, RI's two basic mottos, "He profits most who serves best" and "service above self," had been translated into scores of languages, invoked by thousands of ambassadors and corporate dignitaries, and expounded on countless times in weekly club meetings "in all the commercial centers of the world."

The management of Rotary's community service activities paralleled the Wilsonian approach to international affairs: moralistic, top-down, middle-class, managerial, and deeply rooted in corporate capitalism. The gendered language of community service contradicted its own claims to transparency, expertise, and social trusteeship of the community just as the international system imagined by Wilson never survived the political intrigues of Versailles or the U.S. Senate. For both RI's civic internationalism and Wilsonianism, "International friendship" was not, in fact, for everyone. The high moral sentiments aside, management of the community, like management of world affairs, was an inherently political venture.

### **Boosterism Goes International**

How did the boosterism of the earliest Rotary clubs evolve into the service ideology of RI's civic internationalism by the end of World War I? After the inaugural convention in Chicago in 1910, demands for an administrative headquarters in Chicago run by professional administrative staff, a national convention every year in a different city, and publication of a monthly magazine that contained all the latest news and views of fellow Rotarians across the country began to emerge in the ranks of all fifteen original clubs. These three developments formed the institutional and administrative core of Rotary from its start. Through a mixture of unplanned organizing and concerted

development of specific business contacts, the earliest non-U.S. clubs mushroomed in Winnipeg, London, Dublin, Belfast, Manchester, and Glasgow, making the embrace of the “international” in many ways a *fait accompli* – even if it was limited at first to the “Anglo-Saxon” world of North Atlantic trade circuits.<sup>78</sup> As a result, the organization’s monthly publication, *The Rotarian*, advertised itself in the opening pages of its first publications in the unmitigated language of boosterism: “Trade Expansion: Here is the opportunity for you to make a trade expansion excursion into sixty leading cities of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. Advertise in *The Rotarian* and you will be introduced to six thousand active up-to-date business and professional men.”<sup>79</sup> That same year, *The Rotarian* began devoting its monthly editions to cities where Rotary clubs had flourished. These editions quickly became tabloids of boosterism as many Rotarians often joined and/or helped establish their local chambers of commerce.<sup>80</sup> Though more informative than a standard chamber of commerce pamphlet and not limited to Rotary’s own organizational concerns, the early editions were not quite up to the standards of *Printer’s Ink* and similar established trade publications. The content was predictable and consistent in blurring the line between advertisements from featured local merchants and gushing articles on the city in promotion. The June 1912 edition, for example, trumpeted “Pittsburgh Promotes Progress and the energy of her industry rotates throughout the

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<sup>78</sup> See David Shelley Nicholl, *The Golden Wheel: The Story of Rotary, 1905 to the Present* (Plymouth, Eng.: MacDonald and Evans, 1984) on story of earliest club formation in Ireland, Scotland, and Great Britain and Oren Arnold, *The Golden Strand: An Informal History of the Rotary Club of Chicago* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 88 – 95 for general account of sudden burst of clubs in San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle, and Los Angeles in 1908 – 09 and resistance within the original Chicago club to this national expansion and for founding of the first Canadian club in Winnipeg 1911 – 12.

<sup>79</sup> *The Rotarian*, “Post-Convention Number,” September 1912, n.p.

<sup>80</sup> RI expected its members to join their Chamber of Commerce, but not to set their club in competition with its purposes. Harmony and cooperation were above all the goal.

world” while Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York and other major industrial centers also got their own editions with similar thematic thrust.<sup>81</sup> But other cities were soon able to make their own case for being the next metropolis of their particular state, region, or province as the organization fanned out across the United States.<sup>82</sup>

In fact, the pattern of growth across the United States foreshadowed the hub and spoke pattern in other nations during RI’s international expansion after 1919. After a rapid start in the largest cities of the West Coast and East Coast, Rotary clubs began to sprout up in the South, the Plains, Midwest, Canada, and the United Kingdom as well such that, by 1914, with the hundredth club receiving its charter in Phoenix, Arizona, the geographical distribution of clubs had leveled off at approximately three clubs in the Midwest for every two in the South, two in the Northeast, and one on the Pacific Coast.<sup>83</sup> The fourteen clubs in Canada and the United Kingdom demonstrate just how quickly Rotary clubs leaped across the U.S. – Canadian border and across the Atlantic from Chicago well before reaching much closer cities like Milwaukee or Indianapolis. Nor did regional distribution change significantly with the next 100 cities to charter a Rotary club in the U.S. before World War I. What did change was the size of the new host cities.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> For Pittsburgh, *The Rotarian*, June 1912, front cover. For Boston, *The Rotarian*, May 1912; Philadelphia, July 1912; New York, November 1912; Cleveland, December 1912.

<sup>82</sup> Starting with Spokane, Washington in January 1913, *The Rotarian* also featured that same year San Antonio, Houston, Seattle, Providence, and Oakland and in 1914 Kansas City, all of Texas, Peoria, Syracuse, and Cincinnati and in 1915 Toledo, Lincoln, Atlanta, and all of California. Along with monthly editions devoted to specific cities one finds constant short features and blurbs on the industry and progress taking root in any given city or town with a club.

<sup>83</sup> Analysis based on three membership files: “History & Archives\\_Archives\Ready Reference\Club Histories\First Rotary Clubs in Several Areas (1999 – 2007), “First 150 Clubs – Dates,” and “List of Clubs Thru 1915,” all located in RI Archives. See also Jui-Cheng Huang and Peter Gould, “The Diffusion in an Urban Hierarchy: The Case of Rotary Clubs,” *Economic Geography*, 50: 4 (1974), 333 – 340.

<sup>84</sup> Analysis based on Files: “First 150 Clubs – Dates,” and “List of Clubs Thru 1915,” RI Archives.

**Population of US Cities with Rotary Clubs (in thousands) according to US census of 1910**

|                                    | 500 + | 200 + | 100 + | 75 + | 50 + | 30 + | 25 + | 15 + | 10 + |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Order of Charter #</b>          |       |       |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>1 to 25 (1905 - 7/1911)</b>     | 8     | 10    | 2     | 3    | 2    |      |      |      |      |
| <b>26 to 50 (7/1911 - 7/1912)</b>  |       | 6     | 5     | 4    | 3    | 4    |      |      |      |
| <b>51 to 75 (7/1912 - 7/1913)</b>  |       | 2     | 5     | 3    | 2    | 2    | 3    | 1    |      |
| <b>76 to 100 (7/1913 - 3/1914)</b> |       |       | 4     | 1    | 6    | 7    | 1    | 1    | 1    |

After an initial burst of club growth on the East and West Coasts from 1908 – 1912, Rotary – as a social movement among businessmen and professionals – eventually began revolving around its natural epicenter in Chicago, as large, medium and then smaller cities in the Midwest became the most common locations for new clubs as well as epicenters of growth within their own networks of business interests and contacts. In short, while most of the first 100 clubs were in large cities embedded within national and international circuits of trade, the overall distribution favoring the mid-western world of Rotary’s origins stabilized after 1913, due most likely to the onset of World War I and saturation of the largest urban centers.

Woven into the enthusiasm for the emerging industrial prowess of so many cities in the early editions of *The Rotarian* is a glorification of the cultural and historical roots of the “island communities” of mid-western Protestantism. The radial spread of Rotary clubs from Chicago reflected the cultural geography of middle America’s idealism as it achieved self-awareness and national appeal. Urban growth, ethnic and religious diversity, and the spread of large corporations challenged the cultural authority of the Protestant, middle classes of the region as its leadership class came to include Catholics, corporate managers, urban professionals, and small producers in large cities from recent immigrant stock. This new and expanded leadership group articulated a patriotic

symbolism that drew a mythic arc from the original settlers and pioneers as idealized patriots to the character and virtues of the new middle classes. Patriots and pioneers became the basis for much public commemoration and a dominant model for citizen behavior. John Bodnar, in *Remaking America*, describes the cultural seedbed of the mid-western worldview and the challenges it faced as the Progressive Era hit its full stride:

The nationalization of mid-western culture, which had already begun in the nineteenth century, was intensified after the 1890s. This could be seen most clearly in the rising influence of the patriot symbol. During the nineteenth century the region's culture had been dominated by a native, Protestant middle class that celebrated self-reliant, small-scale capitalists as model citizens. This cultural construction reflected the belief of middle-class leaders that they had been responsible for the region's growth and an attempt by them to reform the behavior of thousands of immigrants whom they felt did not share their commitment to self-improvement and progress. These leaders and the communities in which they lived were certainly proud of the patriotism of their ancestors, but they saw all that they had built grounded ultimately in the rugged individualism which they believed they and their pioneer ancestors had exhibited.<sup>85</sup>

Within the pages of *The Rotarian* appear countless examples of the same: Rotary clubs organizing and leading parades, celebrations, and anniversaries in the name of civic pride and respect for local tradition and, very often, as a means of fundraising for local charities. During the war years, the same impulse found expression in Preparedness Parades and voluntary drives for the war effort, particularly for Liberty Loans.<sup>86</sup>

Grafting the dynamism of a rapidly industrializing economy onto the rugged stalks of citizen-pioneers demanded some creative interpretations, and RI was up to the task. For instance, Chesley Perry, the indefatigable General Secretary of RI (1910 –

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<sup>85</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 113 – 114.

<sup>86</sup> See Cecilia O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) on the origins and depth of this form of U.S. nationalism during World War I.

1942) and editor of *The Rotarian* (1911 – 1928), introduced his readers to the French voyagers, priests, and settlers of what later became Peoria, Illinois as:

. . . intrepid men with a mission to perform. Dangers, hardships and sufferings did not prevent them from doing their duty. The traders that followed them into the wilderness were equally as brave and the pioneers, who came later and established settlements in the wilderness, likewise were rugged men, who believed in the spirit of fair play and possessed a respect for the rights of others. Peoria's ancestry is one of which any city might be proud. The early inhabitants would make good Rotarians today. It is from such an ancestry that Peoria has inherited her progressive spirit and many of her high ideals.<sup>87</sup>

The boosterism of a Rotary club could be played out well beyond the local level, as the Chicago headquarters sought to position itself as a clearinghouse for many other Peorias in the United States.

Attracting new advertising dollars at *The Rotarian* involved weaving together the local patriotic traditions of individual clubs with a national as well as international narrative of economic progress through corporate capitalism. In the case of Kansas City, the frontier thesis soared in rhetoric:

A century ago, herds of buffalo grazed where colossal skyscrapers now stand. At the junction of two great rivers, . . . , the painted braves of the Kansas tribe fished, hunted and scalped. Palefaces appeared on the Santa Fe trail, westward highway of progress on which the prairie schooners of the traders rumbled in journeys of commercial conquest. Blood was spilled. Tepees vanished. Cabins were built. Grain was sowed and crops harvested. Traders voyaged and returned with wealth from the Spanish southwest.<sup>88</sup>

Rewriting the construction of an inland empire continental in scale and genocidal in practice into a tale of “commercial conquest” and vanishing tepees has been a fundamental trope of all popular forms of U.S. history. But the eagerness to deploy such

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<sup>87</sup> Chesley Perry, “Peoria, a heritage left by sturdy pioneers,” *The Rotarian*, Special Issue on Peoria, Illinois, July 1914, p. 23.

<sup>88</sup> “Exemplifying the Kansas City Spirit,” *The Rotarian*, May 1914, p. 25.

a narrative in the context of a magazine devoted to boosterism stretched over an international canvas demonstrates the reciprocity between the building of a national corporate culture and an image of the United States as a benevolent world power. It was not settler colonialism, violent extraction of natural resources, and bloody land grabs that “won the west” for the United States. Rather, it was the unfolding of trade over time and “the progressive spirit” and “high ideals” that thrived in the present. Nowhere in such narratives could one speak of the United States as a form of empire any more than in the boosterism of RI’s many clubs in the United States. The republican virtues and frontier ruggedness exemplified in the glorious transformation of prairie towns like Peoria and Kansas City into modern cities with “colossal skyscrapers” were safe and sound in the first decades of the twentieth century. Such virtues were alive and well, still animating the Rotarians of those cities. They were also ready for export in a globalizing economy.

The modern economy was not so foreign after all – nor were other nations. Among the paeans to industrial progress, pioneer patriotism, and business civilization in the heartland was an emphatic acceptance of the new Canadian, British, and Irish clubs. The cover of the September 1912 edition, in particular, announced the establishment of the International Association of Rotary clubs with an image of the English lion and the American eagle spinning the symbolic wheel of Rotary in unison. Within the year, three more editions appeared touting U.S., British, and Canadian cooperation followed by Edinburgh’s own special edition in April 1914. The inclusion of British and Canadian clubs into Rotary’s flagship publication reflected a key institutional as well as editorial choice. The Rotary club was not limited to the celebration of the pioneer-citizens of the modern, industrial order in the United States. Rather, Rotary’s mission went beyond the

borders of the United States. But how far should it go, especially after the start of “The Great War” in late summer of 1914?

The year 1915 proved a critical turning point. Until the outbreak of war in Europe, there was no consensus on whether the I.A.R.C. should focus on expanding from Great Britain into continental Europe or south into Latin America. Both views had strong support. But the decision to hold the annual convention of 1915 in San Francisco during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition tipped the balance in favor of Latin American expansion. It also helped that the Panama Canal had just opened for business.<sup>89</sup> Peppered throughout *The Rotarian* from 1913 until 1915 were advertisements for the International Exposition, sometimes paid for by San Francisco Rotarians themselves.<sup>90</sup> Calling the Exposition “a remarkable opportunity for us,” the I.A.R.C.’s Board of Directors spent the week calling on “the representative men from South America . . . at the exhibits of their respective republics.” By the fall of 1915, a special committee had formed dedicated to “extension work in non-English speaking countries and particularly in Latin America” and by April 1916 the first Rotary club in Latin America came together in Havana, Cuba. Within three years, Havana Rotarians sponsored new clubs in Santiago de Cuba (1918), Matanzas (1918), and Cienfuegos (1919), resulting in the establishment of a Rotary club in practically every Cuban city by the early 1930s.

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<sup>89</sup> For a detailed analysis of the centrality of the Panama Canal to the emergence of the United States as an imperial power, see Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). McGuinness demonstrates clearly the expression of U.S. economic and cultural power outside U.S. national territory in the construction and control of the Panama Canal by the United States.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, *The Rotarian*, March 1913, p. 3, paid for by “Rotarian G. A. Lenoir of Bare Bros, Furniture, Carpets, and Draperies.”



By the time the U.S. had entered the war in April 1917, Rotary had already been fostering its own Anglo-American relations for five years, leaving only one possible ally in the war in the minds of many U.S. Rotarians. The cover of the August 1917 edition of *The Rotarian*, for example, could easily have been produced by George Creel's Committee on Public Information. Designed by the Toronto Rotary club, the cover featured two soldiers towering over North America: A U.S. and a Canadian soldier both in defensive posture with fixed bayonet staring across the Atlantic toward Europe with steely resolve. With a caption that read "Comrades in arms," the image left no doubt where the I.A.R.C. stood on the war. By the war's conclusion, Rotary clubs had proven themselves to be solid contributors to the war effort, particularly adept at taking the lead on the Liberty Loan Drives in the U.S., Cuba, and Canada. Moreover, their weekly luncheons were ideal venues for noted guest speakers from the U.S. government and military and for the indefatigable "four minute men" of George Creel's Committee on Public Information.<sup>91</sup>

The advent of peace in Europe showed just as clearly in *The Rotarian* – now titled "The Magazine of Service." The hawkish theme of the Toronto club's cover from the year prior now gave way to the symbol of the International Red Cross and a warning to its readers that "Reconstruction Problems Bring Greater Responsibilities" on the cover of the December 1918 edition. Though not necessarily shared by all the rank and file, within

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<sup>91</sup> On the Committee on Public Information, see George Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920); idem., *Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1920); and idem., *The War, the World and Wilson* (New York: Harper, 1920) as well as Gregg Wolper, "The Origins of Public Diplomacy: Woodrow Wilson, George Creel, and the Committee on Public Information," Ph.D. diss., Department of History, University of Chicago, 1991.

the pages of Rotary's monthly publication one can easily follow the trajectory from the eager boosterism of "sturdy pioneers" and "Pittsburgh promotes progress" to full scale war mobilization to the humanitarian internationalism of the Red Cross to a nation's call to rebuild a European continent ravaged by industrialized warfare. Already committed to international growth by 1912 thanks to the success of large clubs in the U.K. and Canada, the I.A.R.C. had become fully enveloped in the war effort at all levels – from local to international – as well as the emerging world of international non-governmental organizations. Both boosterism, drenched in the mythical waters of rugged frontiersmen, and war mobilization, underscored by pre-war economic and social ties with Great Britain and the power of U.S. government propaganda, contributed significantly to the evolution and content of Rotary's civic internationalism during its formative years between 1910 and 1920. But, as the appearance of the Red Cross attests, there were more ingredients as well. The moral dimensions of RI's civic internationalism blurred with U.S. nationalism in complex ways as Rotarians answered Wilson's call to "make the world safe democracy" in a time of war and then for "international friendship" in a time of peace.

### **Jesus, Lincoln, and Florence Nightingale**

Expansion beyond the limits of the English-speaking world was not the only key development during the European conflagration. In contrast with the unapologetic boosterism of other early editions of *The Rotarian*, the monthly's "Tenth Anniversary" edition (February 1915) featured a striking and revealing front cover. Under the slogan "Rotary's Faith: International Peace & Goodwill" stand Jesus to the left, Abraham

Lincoln to the right, and Florence Nightingale in the middle. Below these three figures is Rotary's first motto: "He Profits Most Who Serves Best," first coined by Arthur F. Sheldon, an early marketing and salesmanship "expert" from Chicago and later co-founder of the London Rotary club. Just as national advertisers and salesmen sought to distance themselves from the sordid reputations of hawkers and charlatans, the businessmen of the new middle classes were struggling with a similar problem. By adopting the language of professionalism and the service ideology, both groups found a plausible and common case for legitimacy and participated in their own way in the birth of public relations.<sup>92</sup> There was, in fact, a significant overlap in the rhetoric and early growth of the American Association of Advertising Clubs and Rotary clubs.<sup>93</sup>

But early Rotarians went one step further than their contemporaries in the emerging fields of advertising and marketing. Well before Sheldon's motto swept the 1911 Portland convention, there was a growing emphasis on "The Golden Rule of Business" as a way to temper criticism of Rotary clubs as merely crass profiteering through business networking.<sup>94</sup> The Seattle club in particular pushed for a detailed platform to which all original sixteen member clubs of the National Association of Rotary clubs could point as a transcendent purpose of a given city's Rotary club. By 1914, the motto "He profits most who serves best" had evolved into "The Holy Doctrine

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<sup>92</sup> See Walter A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), esp. the introduction and chapters 3 and 4 as well as Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>93</sup> Both the Dallas and Atlanta Rotary clubs formed out of the nucleus of active members of the American Association of Advertising Club.

<sup>94</sup> Paul P. Harris, founder of the first Rotary club in Chicago, "National Rotarianism," *The National Rotarian*, January 1911, pp. 1 – 3; Chesley R. Perry, General Secretary, "The Philosophy of Rotary," *The Rotarian*, July 1914, p. 24.; and The University of Chicago Social Science Survey Committee, *Rotary? A University Group Looks at the Rotary Club of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1934).

of Service”: The aura of the marketplace was to exceed the exemplary customer service of AT & T and Wanamaker’s.<sup>95</sup> “Service above self,” Rotary’s other motto, was developing into a personal and civic avocation for the leaders of business with quasi-religious dimensions. Thus, later that same summer at the Houston convention, Russell Greiner of Kansas City, Rotary’s new president, announced his vision for the coming year as if from a pulpit:

A real Rotarian is a safe man for anyone to do business with . . . . Rotary is making men, it is a melting-pot and a cleansing crucible. Rotary is the Golden Rule of business. Its principles are those of the church. Its work is to lead men out of themselves into the noblest channels of existence. I know it is the truth, for through Rotary I have been instructed, encouraged and uplifted. . . . It takes no great flight of fancy to picture its effectiveness in the building of civic righteousness and the betterment of business.<sup>96</sup>

Greiner’s position was a well-established theme by this time. The mix of a marketized and masculinized language of character, trust, and virtue with a moralistic language of “civic righteousness” and the “Golden Rule of Business” made possible a marriage of better business practices and religious faith. The Rotary club’s capacity to blur the lines between the private interests of its members and the public interests of the community had its parallel in the rhetorical merger of economic citizenship and Christian uplift. The tableaux on the cover of *The Rotarian* in 1915 included Jesus for important reasons. The Protestant work ethic had its iconography.

In fulfillment of Glenn Mead’s challenge to develop their own professional code for businessmen in 1913, the 167 Rotary clubs of the I.A.R.C. adopted their first official

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<sup>95</sup> Hon. Ed. F. Harris, “The Holy Doctrine of Service,” *The Rotarian*, March 1914, 48 – 50. Harris ends his opinion piece with a detailed agenda of reforms that covers the breadth of Progressive Era politics: “Co-operation in civic developments, . . . means working together for better streets, better pavements, better lighting . . . and a loftier conception of the value of true popular government . . . .”

<sup>96</sup> Russell Greiner, I.A.R.C. President, *The Rotarian*, August 1914, the cover.

Code of Ethics at the San Francisco convention in 1915. Despite the prevalence of lofty religious sentiment in everyday club speeches, activities and publications, there were no overt religious references in the code. Instead, it placed better business practices in a progressive, secular, and humanitarian language and in the form of a personal oath:

My business standards shall have in them a note of sympathy for our common humanity. My business dealings, ambitions and relations shall always cause me to take into consideration my highest duties as a member of society . . . so when I have ended each of them I shall have lifted the level of human ideals and achievements a little higher than I found it.<sup>97</sup>

The creed of the professional and reputable businessman, it turned out, did not require any explicit religious framework. With a code “founded on love” and neutral on “the present dispute in society between the Conservative and the Liberal,” Rotary had developed a form of civil religion as the service club sought to reconfigure the fundamentals of republicanism and classic economic liberalism within the hothouse of Progressive Era reformism.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, for all its claims of avoiding “partisan politics,” the I.A.R.C. had already begun to signal its willingness to identify itself with national political trends by 1913 long before the days of Preparedness Parades and Liberty Loan Drives. Rotarians not only could but should be good patriots as well as good professionals. When Woodrow Wilson spoke on the meaning and purpose of “service,” Rotary’s headquarters was quick to point out the alignment of its own institutional objectives with the national and international mission of the United States:

This is the solemnity that comes upon a man when he knows that he is about to be clothed with the responsibilities of a great example which America shall set to the world itself. The word that stands at the center of

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<sup>97</sup> *Convention Proceedings*; San Francisco, 1915; 117.

<sup>98</sup> From the “Summary” of the Rotary Code of Ethics for All Business Men: “The Motive of the Code” and “The Value of the Code.”

what has to be done is ‘service.’ The one thing that the businessmen of the United States are now discovering is ... that they must render a service or get nothing; and that in the regulations of business the government ... must determine whether what they are doing is a service or is not a service, and that everything in business and politics is going to be reduced to this standard....

I want to proclaim for my fellow citizens this gospel for the future, that the men who serve will be the men who profit.<sup>99</sup>

The editors left no doubt as to why they wanted to feature Wilson’s speech: “And Mr. Wilson might well have added the Rotary motto and said in conclusion, ‘He Profits Most Who Serves Best.’” Though the relationship between Rotary as a voluntary association and the state was often ambiguous and contested, there were times in which they overlapped. Clearly, this was one of those moments. The placement of Abraham Lincoln on the right side of the February 1915 cover of *The Rotarian* had its purpose as well.<sup>100</sup>

But it was in the conception – or rather re-conception – of the United States as a moral force in the world where a real convergence occurred. Religious in tone but not in content, Rotary’s service ideology helped reconfigure the national mission of the United States from reluctant world power to righteous world leader. Much like the missionary impulse driving the internationalism of the YMCA, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the Salvation Army, and similar organizations, the civic internationalism of the Rotary club hinged upon the belief that its particular code of ethics was not only

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<sup>99</sup> *The Rotarian*, February 1913, “President-Elect Woodrow Wilson of the United States of America Declares for the Acceptance of Principles Distinctly Rotarian,” 33.

<sup>100</sup> The Springfield, Illinois Rotary club actually merged boosterism and Lincolnia with a full page advertisement in *The Rotarian*: “The Rotary Club of Springfield, Ill invites International Rotary and all its friends to visit this world shrine.” *The Rotarian*, May 1923, 250. With the annual international convention being held in St. Louis in 1923, the Springfield club pushed the matter further, getting its own feature article in *The Rotarian*. See Nellie Browne Duff, “Rotary Memorial Tribute to Lincoln: Visitors to Convention at Saint Louis Participate in Special Services Conducted by the Rotary Club of Springfield, Ill., at Lincoln’s Tomb,” *The Rotarian*, August 1923, 29 – 30, 47.

normative, but transformative for those who accepted it. Only in Rotary's "world fellowship," conversion and redemption came through acceptance of professional codes and higher business standards specifically and through regular contact and full engagement in an international network of business and professional peers generally. In his presidential address to the annual convention in Toronto in 1924, Guy Gundaker, a successful Philadelphia restaurateur and co-founder of the National Restaurant Association, laid out what had become a mantra for the straight and narrow path of modern business practices.<sup>101</sup> Opening with a quotation of Abraham Lincoln praying for divine guidance, he then explained that:

A world fellowship, while necessarily contingent on the extent and successful establishment of Rotary in all the nations of the world, is likewise contingent on the correctness of the standards of business practice of the men privileged to enter that fellowship.

Until men meet on the common ground of correct business methods, there can be no world fellowship of business men.... The major Rotary activity for the immediate future will be an increasing and unceasing activity for better business methods and their standardization in codes of ethics.<sup>102</sup>

To become a true professional and honest businessman through personal adoption of "correct and ethical standards of business" allowed entrance into a "world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of service." For potential Rotarians outside the United States, participation in that fellowship was presented as an ethical choice, not an imperial imposition; an economic opportunity, not a colonial proposition; a civic duty, not a coercive act.

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<sup>101</sup> Guy Gundaker was one of the founders of the National Restaurant Association.

<sup>102</sup> Guy Gundaker, "President's Address," Toronto, 17 June 1924, Guy Gundaker Papers, RI Archives. See also Guy Gundaker, "Campaign of the International Association of Rotary Clubs for the Writing of Codes of Standards of Correct Practice for Each Business and Profession," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. CI, No. 190, May 1922, pp. 228 – 37 and Benson Y. Landis, *Professional Codes: A Sociological Analysis to Determine Applications to the Educational Profession* (New York City, 1927) for a contemporary view of how professional codes emerged in various professions.

The idealism of Rotary's internationalist vision functioned as an effective and compelling reworking of U.S. expansion abroad into a framework of humanitarian outreach, business modernization, and civic uplift. The expansion of the United States into markets the world over was a moral imperative since standardization of ethical codes and improvement of business methods on a global scale were merely common sense goals and inevitable steps in the march of progress and civilization. After its first formulation in San Francisco in 1915, the code of ethics received great attention at the following year's convention in Cincinnati, resulting in a formal resolution from the business methods committee that each Rotarian strive for the establishment of updated standards of practice for their respective trades and crafts. By the early 1920s, the code had developed into a central theme of Rotary's weekly luncheon speeches through each club's "business methods committee" and the organization's constant stream of publications on the topic.

Guy Gundaker in particular led an in-house, exhaustive study of all existing professional and trade association codes with the goal of sifting out the best elements and incorporating them into an official and detailed code for all of its members – a kind of laundry list of "best practices" for the everyday businessman and professional and his local Rotary club. RI's pamphlet "Codes of Standards of Correct Practice" emerged from the process in 1924 – 25 and became a template not only for many trade associations in the U.S. through the influence of Rotary's individual members in each association, but also in many non-U.S. cities through translations of the codes.<sup>103</sup> Visions of the

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<sup>103</sup> Internal RI documents estimate up to 200 codes were written between 1915 and 1933 through the efforts of individual Rotarians well placed in their trade associations. For example, Lester Struthers to Guy Gundaker, 13 July 1928, File: [Business Methods Committee 1928 – 29, Roy Ronald, William R. Ronald, and Lester Struthers], Guy Gundaker Papers, RI Archives. Also,



associative state and welfare capitalism within the U.S. were very much a part of an international dialogue within the world of Rotary.

In this light, Florence Nightingale's appearance on the Tenth Anniversary cover in 1915 between Jesus and Lincoln takes on fuller meaning. In fact, as the central and dominant figure, she completes the tableau in two important ways. First, her image suggests the many mission-oriented and humanitarian international organizations like the Red Cross, YMCA, and Boy Scouts that came before and worked side by side with Rotary, especially during and after World War I. Second, it amplifies the sympathetic and sentimental dimensions of Rotary's civic internationalism in ways only a woman of her historic stature could. In particular, her presence softens the presumed hard-edged, no-nonsense masculinity of the marketplace much as Rotary's service ideology did. One Pittsburgh Rotarian took the sentiment to a whole new level:

A new child of God has been born on Earth. Industry is his father, Justice his mother. By the holy bonds of love and a vow to be of mutual service were they united. And to them was born the child Rotary – dedicated to spread among men the divine qualities of Industry, Justice, and Unselfish Service, that humanity might gather the fruitful profits thereof.<sup>104</sup>

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Sydney Pascall, successful British candy-maker and first European president of RI (1931 – 32), pushed RI's codes of standards of correct practice at the international economic conference held under the auspices of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1927. In response to passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act and its codes of fair competition for all industrial groups in 1933, RI Pres John Nelson of Montreal convoked the U.S. National Assembly within RI, which appointed an *ad hoc* committee of U.S. Rotarians which sent a message to all U.S. clubs urging acceptance of FDR's 'blanket' code as compromise between the chaos of no codes on one hand and industrial codes on the other. The committee was then also tasked by the RI Board of Directors to study how U.S. Rotary clubs might help with re-employment programs. These developments came in addition to lively debates within *The Rotarian* and the weekly newsletter for all clubs on the NRA while the *ad hoc* committee on the NIRA examined the industrial codes and made recommendations to Rotary based on them. The Supreme Court's overturning of the NIRA in 1935 brought an end to this *ad hoc* committee and the whole process, resulting in Rotary's return to the promotion of ethical business practices as a private, voluntary matter after 1936. *Convention Proceedings*, Twenty-Third Annual International Convention, Boston, 1933, Rotary International,

<sup>104</sup> Jacob Mazer, quoted in the Chicago Rotary club's bulletin, *The Weekly Yell*, 5 October 1918, n.p., Chicago One Archives, Chicago, Illinois.

Hyperbole aside, the gendered figures of industry and justice brought together in a companionate model of love and marriage expressed the sense of new possibilities for social and community activism among businessmen. The offspring, naturally, was a boy.

RI's gendered conception of service only deepened with time as Rotarians' wives became adjunct members under the label "Rotary Anns." A poignant example of this trend appeared in *The Rotarian* in 1923 as a kind of political cartoon.<sup>105</sup> At a crossroads stands a virtuous woman named "Rotary Ethics" (under a sign that reads RI's other motto "Service above self") who is pointing down an even, sunlit path to "Golden Rule: Fair Profit." A "Business Man," noticeably below her and in need of her guidance, hesitates as he reconsiders his first step in the opposite direction – "Any Thing to Make Money" – which leads to a closed bridge made of "Dishonesty, greed, selfishness, and jealousy" and teetering precariously over a chasm. The Rotarian cartoonist from Salem, Oregon deployed a standard image of republican virtue that seemed to place a woman's wisdom above a befuddled businessman. Yet the man is in the position to decide what kind of marketplace relations to pursue as a future course and to act on that decision, while she remains fixed in place and above the fray. Women, no matter how barred from formal membership in any Rotary club, were a necessary component in the re-imagining of RI's service ideology as an ultimately masculine activity. Manly forms of pity and charity in the stern world of business depended on the incorporation of the feminine under the social trusteeship of "the representative businessmen of the community." The service ideology embedded within RI's civic internationalism opened up a complex reworking of gender identities in ways that updated and stabilized the relationship between

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<sup>105</sup> *The Rotarian*, May 1923, 26.

masculinity, business, and community service and marginalized the role of women as both business and community leaders.

As a result, the 1915 cover is far greater than the sum of its parts. Taken as a whole, the image provides a moral and narrative framework in which not only Rotary clubs but the United States as a nation appear as a naturally unfolding force for good – a kind of triptych in honor of intrinsic American civic and religious virtues now ready for an international audience. The power to transform the exotic other of foreign lands into a business and professional peer only confirms the universal nature of the exceptional nation’s new calling. The combination of Jesus Christ, Abraham Lincoln, and Florence Nightingale on the Tenth Anniversary edition of *The Rotarian* reinforced the preferred narrative of the United States as a moral, civic, and humanitarian force for good in the world even as it enabled the expansion of U.S. corporate capitalism into foreign markets. In the logic of the Rotarians’ worldview, there could never be a question of the U.S. projecting its power and influence over and against the interests of their non-U.S. members. The anti-colonial tenets of American exceptionalism prevented such a possibility. Rather, the benevolent inclusion of non-U.S. business and professional elites into the fold only confirmed the world historical mission of “the commercial square deal” that was the calling of the United States.

A more Wilsonian view of international engagement would be hard to find.

### **At the Corner of State and Main**

There was a dual legitimization process unfolding within Rotary clubs in the U.S. before the 1920s that reflected broader national and economic challenges: business

struggled to redefine itself in professional, progressive, and humanitarian terms while the nation sought to reinvent its own identity and purpose before a new array of international pressures and colonial possessions. The standardization and codification of business practices at local, state, and national levels not only accelerated integration of U.S. national markets and a deeper sense of middle-class identity across state lines, but also introduced strains of Wilsonian rhetoric of uplift and moral purpose to the modernization of business well before the elections of 1912. With the growing demand for regulation of market excesses, especially after 1907, came increasing disenchantment with the businessman as an independent and self-interested actor struggling to survive among cut-throat competitors. Surely, the marketplace was better than and more than that. As a result, Rotary's sense of mission in service to the world, though wedded to familiar notions of limited state oversight, carried as well quasi-religious commitments to civic improvement, philanthropic duty, and material progress that, in sum, promised to counterbalance the human cost of rapid changes and deep inequities endemic to unregulated market competition. The rehabilitation of business in the U.S. as a middle-class champion of a more progressive and abundant tomorrow paralleled and contributed to the reinvention of the United States as a benevolent, civilizing force abroad. Insofar as the chaotic streets and embarrassingly inhumane business practices of American cities like Chicago were "cleaned up" in the name of greater efficiency and social responsibility, the more compelling was the claim that the U.S. had something of substance to offer the world in the way of "modern" civilization. Economic expansion of the United States beyond its borders required a more compelling moral narrative than "caveat emptor" or the cruelties of social Darwinism. And a "national movement" of business and

professional men organizing themselves into a national network of clubs formally responsible for the social conditions and improvements of their local city and community proved a valuable contributor to the construction of that moral narrative.

Consequently, while membership in a Rotary club hinged upon one's business reputation and/or professional status within the marketplace since its earliest days in Chicago, Rotary's expansion beyond the United States was not simply an epiphenomenon of U.S. corporate penetration of new markets abroad. Its ideological and institutional adaptations to the pervasive distrust of business activities at the dawn of the twentieth century – a distrust of monopolies and big business on the one hand and against the slipperiness of salesmanship and shoddy work of unprofessionals on the other – centered on the establishment of its non-profit status and a language of civic engagement and community service for the new middle classes with a minimum appearance of base partisanship and a maximum emphasis on the virtues and character of true professionalism.

The innovations had multiple manifestations, but one of the most outstanding lay in the tactical dance between the market/non-market divide. For example, one of the earliest tests of Rotary's appeal as an international organization arose when the newly formed London Rotary club was considering whether to affiliate formally with the U.S. clubs in 1911 or assert its own independence. When the club wrote the newly formed headquarters of the National Association of Rotary Clubs in Chicago asking why they should affiliate, the initial response focused on the economic advantages from developing "inter-city trade" and the irrelevance of the club's origins in the United States: "Just forget the word 'National' is in the name... If Winnipeg and London and Manchester and

a few more cities outside of the States come into the Association it will simply have to change its name to the Inter-national Association.”<sup>106</sup> Becoming “international” was a rather simple, practical matter.

The new headquarters for the National Association of Rotary Clubs downplayed the national origins of its organization from its inception in 1910 and chose, instead, to highlight the benefits of deepening inter-city trade relations and deploy that as its model for international relations: “From a recent visit to Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska we learned that these two cities have been drawn closer together in friendship since the establishment of Rotary Clubs of these cities. May it not be so with our two great nations?”<sup>107</sup> The common ground between the Chicago and London Rotary clubs was not couched in the language of shared Anglo-Saxon racial identity nor co-imperial destinies. Although bonds between U.S., Canadian, and British Rotarians were easier to imagine and establish than with other nations because of imagined Anglo-Saxon solidarities, to be sure, concerns on both sides of the Atlantic were more mundane – and more ambitious – than the deepening of racial kinship. Rather, the focus lay in the inexorable logic of thickening trade relations built upon cooperation and a managerial, professional competence that transcended political and national identities. The rational growth and guidance of the markets should trump all other differences – at least in theory. Separated by national identities and an ocean, still, the Chicago and London clubs were merely two cities – like Omaha and Lincoln – developing closer trade links and greater understanding “in friendship” under one marketplace. And Rotary meant to smooth the way.

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<sup>106</sup> Chesley R. Perry, General Secretary of the National Association of Rotary Clubs, to A. P. Bigelow, Manager, Initial Towel Company, 19 December 1911; Club Historical File, London Rotary Club; RI Archives.

<sup>107</sup> Perry to Bigelow, 19 December 1911, London Club Historical File, RI Archives.

Yet, the marketplace had its pitfalls and dangers. The London club was not entirely convinced of the Chicago office's reasons for joining. Founded through the particular efforts of Arthur Sheldon, a kind of guru for the science of salesmanship from the U.S., the London club wanted evidence that "the National Association [was] not a money making institution," that they were, in fact, engaging in a burgeoning international movement among businessmen and professionals with goals genuinely loftier than the mere collection of dues from its members and the slick bromides of new sales techniques imported from America. The response from the founder of the original Rotary club in Chicago, Paul Harris, was direct: "The National Association is not at all a money making concern, it is incorporated under our laws relating to 'Corporations not for pecuniary profit,' nor is it in any indirect manner, an institution of profit." Harris, a lawyer by trade, touted the non-profit status of the organization, as incorporated according to "our laws" in the state of Illinois, as absolute proof that Rotary stood for something greater than mere "money making."<sup>108</sup> Their fears assuaged, the London Rotarians voted unanimously to affiliate with the soon-to-be international association of Rotary clubs and follow the lead of its headquarters in Chicago. The following year, one of the London club's delegates to the convention in Duluth announced: "We come as students to this great country of the United States, to learn something about Rotary, and it is up to you, my friends and brethren, to see that we go back live, red-hot missionaries."<sup>109</sup> As London went in 1911 - 12, so have gone literally thousands of cities and towns throughout the world ever since. Rotary's sales pitch on being a non-profit for reticent Londoners proved a template for subsequent international expansion.

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<sup>108</sup> Paul P. Harris to A. P. Bigelow, 26 January 1912 and A. P. Bigelow to Paul Harris, 4 April 1912, Club Historical File, London Rotary Club.

<sup>109</sup> *The Rotarian*, September 1913, 29.

But the non-profit status of Rotary only went so far and meant so much. When it came to developing a coherent plan of expansion into Latin America after 1915, the organization first relied on enterprising U.S. members traveling abroad on business to seek out opportunities for new clubs and report back their successes and failures in their efforts to “spread Rotary among the native peoples of other countries more than among our American brethren who happen to be in other countries.”<sup>110</sup> The approach, however, was *ad hoc* until 1915 when the first concerted effort at “extension” of Rotary clubs began with the Pan-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. The I.A.R.C. planned to work through “representative men of South America” who were expected to attend that convention. The 1915 international convention for Rotary, in fact, was held in San Francisco that same year in order to take advantage of international contacts at the Exposition.<sup>111</sup>

Rotary’s activities at the Pan-Pacific exposition led to the creation of the “Committee on Extension of Rotary in Latin America” in 1916, which began working with and through the foreign departments of specific corporations already looking to expand their Latin American operations, including National City Bank, Singer Sewing, the Waterman Pen Co., National Cash Register, Metropolitan Life, Underwood Typewriter, and Wurlitzer of Cincinnati.<sup>112</sup> When one U.S. corporate agent in Buenos Aires informed the Extension Committee that Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay were not ready for new clubs despite his efforts to “instill the Rotary spirit,” the first-ever

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<sup>110</sup> Chesley R. Perry to Alexander Kent, 7 July 1915, Havana Club Historical File, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>111</sup> Board of Directors of I.A.R.C., “Minutes of Meetings, Extension Committee 1912 – 1929”: 1 August 1914, “Extension Europe Africa/Asia Minor;” 18 July 1915, “Extension in South America;” and 4 – 5 Sept 1915, “Extension Central and South America,” RI Archives.

<sup>112</sup> *Convention Proceedings, Seventh International Convention*; Atlanta, Georgia; 17 – 22 June 1917; 80 – 82.



chairman of Rotary's extension committee, John Turner, was undaunted, announcing to the thousands attending Rotary's 1917 convention in Atlanta that "The greatest opportunity for Rotary is at the present time in South America. . . . We have got to find a man who is in sympathy and has the viewpoint of Latin America."<sup>113</sup> The United States had only just declared war on Germany some nine weeks before. Amidst the patriotic ebullience at the Atlanta convention was the recognition of a business opportunity. Like its corporate allies, Rotary's top administrators knew an emerging market when they saw one. The only real questions focused on identifying the most effective means to establishing new clubs in Latin America and how to pay for that expansion. Building up a non-profit organization's international branches challenged Rotary's administrative capacities. And it cost money. Fortunately, the good offices of many U.S. corporations were more than available.

The National Cash Register Co., in fact, was particularly eager to help. After initially experiencing indifference to the establishment of a Rotary club in Caracas, Venezuela in 1917, several U.S. businessmen visited John H. Patterson, NCR's president, "with the idea of having Rotary taught to his foreign representatives as they visited Dayton." Patterson, who had played a major role at the prior year's convention in Cincinnati and had his own particular version of morally responsible capitalism, was glad to help out: a special committee of the Dayton Rotary Club took up the training of "these National Cash Register men in Rotary" in order to "form a splendid nucleus for work in Latin America."<sup>114</sup> Though the actual results from NCR's pairing up with Rotary in their expansion into Latin America was never well documented, the alliance of specific U.S.

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<sup>113</sup> S. O. Harnecker to John Turner, Chairman of Extension Committee in Latin America, 16 May 1917, reported in *Convention Proceedings*, Atlanta, 1917, 80 – 82.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

corporations with the growth of Rotary had already found its precedent before the entrance of the United States into World War I. And more alliances were to come as city after city in Latin America found itself with its own Rotary club over the coming decades. The greater the presence of U.S. corporations, the more likely the presence, growth, and success of a city's Rotary club. Despite the basic organizational differences between a private, transnational corporation like NCR and an international non-profit organization like Rotary, the synergy for both was undeniable.

Years before the turn to the foreign departments of corporations for help in international growth, the I.A.R.C. also looked to the federal government as a possible ally in their national aspirations. In 1912, one of the most critical national debates centered on banking and currency reforms, which ultimately led to the creation of the Federal Reserve System. As a result, that year's convention in Duluth featured Robert Bonyng of Denver, former U.S. congressman, member of the national monetary commission, and representative of the National Citizens League, as a keynote speaker on the timely topic. After schooling the conventioners on the nature of banking as an industry in the U.S., how all other industries depended on the soundness and efficiency of banking, how the old system was open to the whims of speculation on Wall Street, how the "scattered units" of the banking system led to a reliance on foreign banks for stability in times of crisis, and how the "inelasticity" of the credit system undermined the U.S. dollar in general, he concluded:

We need some institution clothed with proper powers to discharge those duties. They cannot be performed by any local banking institution for profit. Those duties are national in character and the institution to perform them must likewise be of a national character.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> "Banking and Currency Reform," Robert W. Bonyng, *The Rotarian*, September 1912, 7 – 8, 34 – 35.

Working through the National Citizens League, Bonyngge was given access to as many Rotary clubs as he could attend to deliver his message: Only the federal government of the United States, not the speculators on Wall Street, could guarantee structure and stability for the U.S. banking industry and, by extension, all other industries both at home and abroad.

Bonyngge found a receptive audience among the Rotarians in 1912 because their conception of a private, voluntary association did not preclude selective uses of the state like those proposed by Bonyngge. They were already beginning to do it themselves at the state, local, and municipal levels. The same held true as the Committee on Public Affairs reported the pressing need to support legislation on the National Highway System and National Water Ways.<sup>116</sup> Regulation by the state – and debates over how and when it may be employed – was hardly taboo for the early Rotary clubs. When it was a question of better management of macroeconomic structures and improvement of transportation and communications systems, the state had its place and the Rotary club would allow its consideration and lend its support. The dance between the state/non-state divide followed the steps taken at Rotary’s first international convention for generations to come as state-enabled economic and infrastructure development was never seen as a political – i.e., “partisan” – matter. For the world of business, the state had its uses.

The state also had its uses against labor. The period of greatest overlap between the state and Rotary clubs came, not surprisingly, during the Great War. As with many voluntary organizations, Rotary clubs fell under the gravitational pull of the state thanks to the power of patriotic fervor unleashed by the war effort. But it fell to A.M. Briggs,

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 35 – 36.

established member of the Chicago Rotary club and president of the A.M. Briggs Co., which specialized in poster advertising, to merge the national network of Rotary clubs with wartime censorship by the U.S. government. While on a business trip in New York City, Briggs “became imbued with the idea that Rotary could play a part in protecting our government from insidious propaganda and damage and loss of life” through German espionage. Briggs then contacted Chesley Perry, General Secretary of the I.A.R.C. in Chicago and fellow Chicago club member, and sold him on the idea. With Perry’s consent, Briggs went to Washington, D.C. and spoke with Attorney General Thomas Gregory and eventually President Wilson. With their support, Briggs “wired Perry that the idea had been sanctioned and asked Perry to gather a small group of Chicago Rotarians to put his ideas into action.”<sup>117</sup>

The American Protective League (APL) emerged as a private, national organization for the quashing of political dissent and/or labor “unrest” in a time of war. Led by Chicago Rotarians, the I.A.R.C. became an active supporter of the U.S. government’s propaganda and surveillance apparatus.<sup>118</sup> About a dozen Chicago Rotarians, guided by Hinton G. Clabaugh, division superintendent of the Department of Justice’s bureau of investigation in Chicago, wasted no time. Meeting on a Sunday at the

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<sup>117</sup> *The Gyrator of the Rotary Club of Chicago*, 31 March 1928, “Historic Rotary Service,” 2, Chicago One Archives, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>118</sup> For a detailed account of the origins of the APL that refers to Briggs and his fellow Rotarians as “friends in the business community” and “a volunteer organization to aid the Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice,” see Richard Gid Powers, *Broken: The Troubled Past and Uncertain Future of the FBI* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 86 – 92. For an excellent review of the many private, voluntary organizations working with federal, state, and local governments in order to block wartime dissent during World War I, see Christopher Cappozzola, “The Only Badge Needed Is Your Patriotic Fervor: Vigilance, Coercion, and the Law in World War I America,” *The Journal of American History*, 88: 4 (March 2002), 1354 – 1382 and Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1135.

Clark St. office of Bill Kier, another Chicago Rotarian, the group wired “Rotary clubs throughout the United States explaining the idea, and within 36 hours there were more than 200 organizations in the field. Many Chicago Rotarians acted as officers and privates in the Chicago branch of the American Protective League.”<sup>119</sup>

While the APL specialized in “slacker raids” against idle men in public suspected of being draft dodgers, the organization and its 250,000 auxiliaries also joined in the persecution of labor organizations during the war, but particularly the I.W.W.<sup>120</sup> The squelching of wartime dissent served the state as well as business interests, united in common cause by Chicago Rotarians who understood well the power of networking and propaganda and the advantages of blurring the public/private divide: “its ultimate success as an element in the elimination and apprehension of dangerous characters, insidious propaganda, and destruction of property and life was due largely to the manner in which it was organized and the energy and speed with which it was carried on.”<sup>121</sup> Given the ambiguous legal status of the APL, the wartime alliance between the I.A.R.C. and the U.S. government did not last beyond 1919. But the Rotary club’s notion of “community service,” it turned out, could serve as a powerful weapon in the U.S. government’s battle against the I.W.W. and labor internationalism.

The slippery boundaries between the state and the markets had many purposes abroad as well. At times, the progressive inevitabilities of increasing market ties across borders and oceans proved the most compelling argument for RI’s increasing presence outside the United States. The presumed mutuality of economic growth and rationality of

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<sup>119</sup> *The Gyrator*, 31 March 1928, “Historic Rotary Service,” 2.

<sup>120</sup> Powers, *Broken*, 88 – 100; Cappozzola, *JAH*, 88:4, 1367 – 1370, 1377 – 1382.

<sup>121</sup> *The Gyrator*, 31 March 1928, “Historic Rotary Service,” 2.

corporate capitalism took on an air of managerial authority without reference to any one nation or national agenda. Harry Wheeler, first president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (est. 1912) and old friend of Paul Harris, founder of the original Chicago Rotary club in 1905 and Wheeler's colleague at the Chicago Association of Commerce, predicted that Rotary would "benefit not only this country of ours in a business way, but, as you extended your own influence to foreign shores, that like benefits would come to those countries where you might extend your principles."<sup>122</sup> Rotary's extension was a matter of business principles, not nationalist aspirations; of efficient management techniques, not mere partisanship. Thus, Rotary could position itself as mediator between Chicago and London, Tampa and Havana, Dayton and Caracas, New York City and Montevideo.<sup>123</sup> "Take a strong Rotary club, say in Germany, and take a strong Rotary organization in England. Those Rotarian clubs combine the best moral and intellectual men of their respective cities and countries. Do you think that, if they would alike put out their splendid strength, you are going to have millions a year wasted in useless armaments?" queried a British Rotarian in 1913.<sup>124</sup>

At other times, the non-state and non-market status of the organization enabled RI to present itself – and, by extension, its local clubs and members – as above the market fray. Service to the community was not a business opportunity: it was a function of enlightened leadership and an act of love for and protection of the community. Though born in 1912, the same year as the Better Business Bureau and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the *International Association of Rotary Clubs (I.A.R.C.)* was as akin to the

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<sup>122</sup> "A Period of Readjustment," Harry A. Wheeler, *The Rotarian*, September 1913, 29 – 30.

<sup>123</sup> The first Rotary club in South America, the Montevideo Rotary Club received its charter on 1 February 1919. See Enrique Brussoni, *Historia Del Rotary Club de Montevideo, 1918 – 1983* (Montevideo: Rotary Club of Montevideo, 1984).

<sup>124</sup> *The Rotarian*, September 1913, 43.

former as to the latter. Only Rotary carved out a middle ground that became institutionally stable thanks to the non-profit status of the organization and ideologically tenable due to its re-moralization of business in professional, dispassionate, and masculinized terms. In multiple ways, the organization welcomed better regulation of emerging national and international markets, conformity to the interests of corporate capitalism, and the demands of patriotic fervor: a combination with little tolerance for revolutionary movements of any kind. As a result, on both the domestic and international, there was little daylight between the Wilsonian administration and the International Association of Rotary Clubs. On the question of race, the two spoke the same language as well.

### **No Foreigners Allowed**

In 1921, the Chicago Office of Rotary renamed the Foreign Extension Committee simply the Extension Committee. Over protests from British Rotarians, the U.S. committee members believed the adjective “foreign” was inconsistent with Rotary’s international mission. According to the logic of the U.S. side, there were no “foreigners” *per se*, only business and professional counterparts in portions of the world that still happened to fall outside the purview of Rotary’s “world fellowship,” and it was only a matter of time before they received their own personal invitations to the new dispensation.<sup>125</sup> Meanwhile, all those already within that “world fellowship” were, by definition, colleagues and peers – regardless of race, creed, or nationality. In pursuing its idealized counterparts, the international service club was actively working out

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<sup>125</sup> Meeting of the Committee on Foreign Extension Work, 29 – 30 March 1919, in Central Files – Subject Files/[Committee – Extension], “Committee on Foreign Extension Work” [Minutes Book, March 1919 – January 1925], RI Archives.

administrative routines through its Extension Committee for surveying new towns, cities, countries and even entire regions of the world for potential new clubs by the early 1920s. When the committee agreed upon its basic principles for international expansion in 1925, it summarized its approach: “In extending Rotary, Rotarians may be likened to salesmen selling an idea or missionaries preaching a gospel; and a good salesman does not give up because at first his prospective customer will not buy his merchandise; nor does a good missionary quit because the heathen are slow to accept his gospel.”<sup>126</sup> The merger of salesmanship and the missionary impulse was much more than a metaphor: it was the logic of transformation through contact with and involvement in the modern world of international business and progressive government administration.

But contact and transformation were clearly not as universal in practice as RI’s rhetoric. The strategies of inclusion/exclusion that developed in the business civilization imagined by RI’s civic internationalism belied the welcoming of distant strangers into the fold. The closer to home in the U.S., the more prevailing categories of racial hierarchy took effect. But doing more and more business abroad, particularly after World War I, forced the issue in new and destabilizing ways. Expansion of U.S. firms into other countries and vice-versa could only force RI’s hand in that direction as the opening of international branches worked as a kind of centrifugal force to the hierarchies of race as an organizing principle of both U.S. domestic politics and business practices. In 1926, for example, Latin American Rotarians complained to Tom Sutton, one of the top officers of RI, about the prevalence of “American slang and negro stories” in RI’s own monthly,

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<sup>126</sup> “Report of the Extension Committee to the Board of Directors,” for 1924/25, Exhibit B, in Central Files-Subject Files/ [Committee – Extension, (Minutes Book, July 1925 – Aug 1929)], RI Archives.



*The Rotarian*.<sup>127</sup> Sutton, a native of Michigan who made his money during the oil rush in Tampico, Mexico during and after World War I, had already become an important mediator between Mexican and U.S. Rotarians by the early 1920s and later was named RI's first Catholic president in 1929. Sutton had RI's publications committee look into the matter, and its conclusion was instructive: "The articles in *The Rotarian* all in all were written in good English, at least the kind that is in general use in the United States, but that it would be preferable not to have anymore so-called negro stories in *The Rotarian*."<sup>128</sup> "Preferable" was a diplomatic way to put it. Although such stories were less and less common in RI's monthly by the mid-1920s, they did continue to appear in various forms in individual club bulletins, speeches, and "stunts."

Despite RI's official silence on the matter at the international level, practices of racial exclusion in affirmation of white supremacy found expression at the club level in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain in many ways. The minstrel show was a particular favorite of these Rotary clubs in the interwar years as a means of fundraising as well as source of camaraderie among fellow "white" men. RI actively supported the club activity as a "great promoter of good fellowship in Rotary itself, the spread of a better public understanding of Rotary ideals, and the development of Rotary spirit throughout the community wherever the Rotary minstrel idea has been tried out."<sup>129</sup> A feature article

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<sup>127</sup> At this time, circulation for *The Rotarian* approximated its membership of about 120,000. By the late 1920s, *The Rotarian* was a key business publication of the period, in company with *Printer's Ink*, *Iron Age*, *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, and *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*.

<sup>128</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of Board of Directors of RI, 28 – 31 March 1927, "Articles in The Rotarian – Item XIII" (d), p. 25, RI Archives.

<sup>129</sup> Frederick G. Johnson, "Gentlemen – Be Seated!", *The Rotarian*, October 1923, 16 – 17, 50 – 53. Johnson worked in "an editorial and advisory capacity" for the T.S. Denison Company, a Chicago publishing company that specialized in "dramatic" publications for Minstrel Shows.

of *The Rotarian*, in fact, offered details on how to put together a successful “Rotary Minstrel,” down to the best ways to purchase “clean, snappy material” and “excellent negro wigs” at “modest prices.” Advice also included the involvement of “the ladies”: “Mixed minstrels, as they are called, have come into great popularity. Many clubs are putting on shows of this style with considerable success.” The clearest point of the article, however, was just how popular and widespread the Rotary Minstrel shows had become as the writer reviewed the success of shows in Prescott, Arizona (resulting in \$1,112 for a playground donated to the city); Harriman, Tennessee; Portland, Oregon; Hillsdale, Michigan; Dodge City, Kansas; and Calgary and Edmonton in Canada – where “the minstrel show flourisheth transplanted far from Dixie soil.” Each city’s Rotary club raised up to \$3,000 in some cases for local charities and had become highly anticipated annual events for the community. Eager to push the Rotary Minstrel show both as a good source of fun among club members and means of fundraising for community service projects, the author claimed that “space does not permit even listing the numerous other successful minstrel shows that have been given by Rotary clubs in the United States and Canada during the last year or two.” But, as photos from various shows demonstrate, they were all-out social events involving the rental of a local theatre and large stage productions. Given the prevalence of minstrel shows as a club activity, it was hardly necessary to stipulate racial boundaries of club membership throughout the U.S. and Canada, let alone in the U.S. South. When it came to marking off boundaries of race

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Copies of his guidebook on how to organize and promote an amateur minstrel show were available for all Rotary clubs. Ibid., p. 6

during public events held in the name of community service and sponsored by numerous local Rotary clubs, actions spoke louder than words.<sup>130</sup>

Minstrel shows served as an effective way to forge solidarity among the white members of the new middle classes without overt reference to racial exclusions. Purging “negro stories” from its most visible publication in accordance with the Latin American Rotarians’ demands was one thing RI could accomplish with a minimum of resistance. But when it came to race, what each club (both inside and outside the U.S.) did on the matter was its own business so long as it formally adopted RI’s standardized club constitution of 1922, which removed any direct reference to racial qualifications of its membership – typically codified in individual cities’ club constitutions before 1922 as “Any adult white male of good moral character. . . .” As a result, by the mid-1920s, at least RI’s official organs, publications, conferences, and conventions were largely free of any overt forms of racial exclusion. Membership was solely a function of socio-economic status in the community and masculinity – at least officially speaking. But local clubs were also free of any African-Americans as they continued to police the tacit boundaries of “whiteness” through social and economic class identities well into the postwar period.<sup>131</sup> The use of minstrel shows in raising money specifically for Boys’ Work campaigns, in fact, worked in two dimensions at once: businessmen, through their Rotary

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<sup>130</sup> For thorough examination of minstrelsy in U.S. history, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>131</sup> For example, the Rotary club of Adrian, Michigan was still presenting minstrel shows as community fundraisers in the 1950s: “As Adrian Rotary entered the 60s, it was generally agreed that the Minstrel Show was a thing of the past and a new concept should be tried.” For its annual community fundraisers for crippled children and the Adrian Rotary Foundation, the club mounted a version of “The Merchant of Yonkers,” which then became “Hello Dolly.” *The First Fifty Years of the Rotary Club of Adrian, Michigan, Golden Anniversary, 1921 – 1971*, n.p. Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. for example, which held its last annual minstrelsy show as a community fundraiser in the early 1960s. Cite.

club, claimed special tutelage of “the boy as a nation’s greatest asset,” inculcating him in the ways of good citizenship, by promoting and participating in a minstrel show which mocked and marginalized the non-white elements of the community.<sup>132</sup> Through a kind of public theater, the manipulation of racial markers and gendered boundaries helped solidify the authority of white, male business and professional leaders – all in the name of service to and development of the nation’s youth.

After World War I, however, increasing international engagement began destabilizing the tacit whiteness of RI’s civic internationalism. The rapid growth of RI in Latin America and the ascendance of Latin Americans into the highest ranks of RI’s administration presented a significant challenge to RI’s entire framework of civic internationalism: Haiti, Jamaica, and the rest of the West Indies.<sup>133</sup> As international travel and trade among smaller industrial and population centers developed throughout

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<sup>132</sup> For a review of how Rotary clubs became so involved in Boys’ Work campaigns, see William Lewis Butcher, “Boys’ Week and the Boy Problem,” *The Rotarian*, April 1923, 195 – 197, 243, 246. The article proudly recounts how the Boys’ Week festivities started by the New York City Rotary club had extended all the way to Cuban cities.

<sup>133</sup> The first Rotary clubs in Latin American countries were typically the nation’s capital:

|                           |      |
|---------------------------|------|
| Havana, Cuba              | 1916 |
| San Juan, Puerto Rico     | 1918 |
| Montevideo, Uruguay       | 1919 |
| Panama City, Panama       | 1919 |
| Buenos Aires, Argentina   | 1920 |
| Mexico City, Mexico       | 1921 |
| Lima, Peru                | 1922 |
| Valparaiso, Chile         | 1924 |
| Guatemala City, Guatemala | 1925 |
| La Paz, Bolivia           | 1927 |
| Bogotá, Colombia          | 1927 |
| San Jose, Costa Rica      | 1927 |
| Guayaquil, Ecuador        | 1927 |
| San Salvador, El Salvador | 1927 |
| Ascension, Paraguay       | 1928 |
| Teguicigalpa, Honduras    | 1929 |
| Belize, British Honduras  | 1929 |

Source: File, “First Rotary Clubs/Chronological,” RI Archives.

the U.S. and the Americas in general, it was inevitable that cities like Port au Prince and Kingston would come under consideration just as all other major cities and capitals had in Central and South America. But the shared transnational status of business and professional peers promised by RI's civic internationalism, it turned out, entailed deference among equals that could cut both ways: greater prestige through participation in RI's "world fellowship" as well as greater risk of who might be coming to lunch or dinner. With respect to its initial expansion into Europe, Asia, and Latin America, RI managed to adapt – so long as those peers remained safely exotic. The collapsing geography of global capitalism drove some adaptations in race thinking in some of the largest Rotary clubs of the most cosmopolitan cities of the U.S. and in Rotary's headquarters in Chicago. But, as an increasing number of non-U.S. Rotarians entered RI's ranks and as clubs began forming in the smallest of towns and cities after 1918, the entrenched binaries of U.S. race relations became apparent. Rotary's international recruits triggered some veiled – and not so veiled – resistance to those adaptations at the local club level in the United States.

Much like the Japanese government's demand for a formal statement on racial equality in the covenant of the League of Nations, the possibility of a Rotary club in Haiti and Jamaica directly tested the limits of RI's claims to racial pluralism and cultural internationalism within its institutional borders. First suggested to RI's Extension Committee as a potential host city in 1924 by one of its own residents, Kingston, Jamaica was to be surveyed by the president of the Hamilton, Bermuda club on behalf of the committee.<sup>134</sup> Yet the club never materialized – until 1959. The delay was due,

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<sup>134</sup> See, *Weekly Letter*, 9 June 1924 and "Report of Extension Committee by Crawford McCullough, 1924 – 25, Jamaica," RI Archives.

according to Chesley Perry, RI's General Secretary, to "a feeling of American Rotarians generally, and particularly of those in the southeastern part of the United States, ... not to organize Rotary clubs in North America or in the vicinity of North America with members of Negro blood." Though Perry recognized well enough there was, "of course, no justification for this policy in view of the many speeches that are made on the basis that Rotary knows no creedal or racial distinctions," he demurred to the wishes of some of the largest and most important clubs in Rotary by arguing that the racial policies of RI's Board of Directors was nevertheless constitutional.<sup>135</sup> Nor was Perry alone in his frustration over the matter. Paul King, the chair of the International Service Committee (the new name for the Extension Committee after 1927), reported in confidence to Chesley Perry that:

it [was] painful to have an illusion shattered. I lost one myself this year when the Board vetoed the proposition of organizing Rotary clubs in Haiti. Up to that time I supposed we really meant what we said about the Brotherhood of Man, but fortunately... Rotary I imagine will go on just the same despite the loss of an illusion now and then.<sup>136</sup>

Though rejection of Port au Prince on grounds of white supremacy belied claims of racial tolerance of RI's civic internationalism for Paul King, it was a regrettable but necessary compromise for the sake of solidarity among North America's Rotary clubs. The exotic-peers of RI's civic internationalism had to pass certain color lines as well as meet certain class standards.

The logic behind the rejection of Port au Prince was, in some ways, mundane. If RI began entering "the West Indies and the islands of the Caribbean Sea, ... it would not

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<sup>135</sup> Chesley R. Perry to Edwin H. Rushmore, Secretary, Rotary Club of New York City, 31 March 1938, Box 19, File: [Clubs – Rotary] General Correspondence, RI Archives. Perry actually sent two letters to Rushmore on the same day on the same subject.

<sup>136</sup> Paul King to Chesley Perry, 5 March 1929, James Wheeler Davidson Papers, Vol. II, RI Archives.

be possible to get a true cross-section of the business and professional men in the community in cities of that region, without including Negroes in the membership..., and that would be displeasing to many Rotarians....” Given RI’s open-ended definition of membership based on all business and professional vocations, the exclusion of black leaders in cities like Kingston and Port au Prince was untenable. Neither lack of business reputation, professional status, or amount of property could be invoked. The exclusion was about race.

But the color line within Rotary was hinged on gender and the intimacies of informal social contact in the inner-sanctums of white privilege:

If they are admitted to the club some day one of them will come up to the Atlanta Club, or to the Chicago Club, or to the New York club, or to the Toronto club, and he will naturally expect to attend the meeting, and if there is a ladies auxiliary, his wife will have to be invited to attend that meeting. Now this is all as it should be, but you and I know what would be liable to happen in any one of these cities from Atlanta to Toronto.<sup>137</sup>

Perry pointed out that, unlike a Chamber of Commerce, merchants’ association, or professional society “which might permit a mixed racial membership,” the Rotary club was too close and intimate socially to accommodate. Wives and daughters were involved. More than business was at stake. The formal invisibility of domestic partners in RI’s weekly meetings and activities suddenly became crucial when race and gender relations worked in combination at social events. The Rotarians’ luncheon club was often held in very close quarters, while the luncheon (or dinner) itself often took place in segregated hotels. The complications it would bring to RI’s social relations and events both public and private were simply not manageable since equality across certain racial boundaries and gendered contact were not conceivable. Some differences were greater than others.

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<sup>137</sup> Perry to Rushmore, 31 March 1938.

But the logistics of social interaction aside, it was also a question of defending the privileges of whiteness in the United States of America and its perceived overlap with managerial authority and social trusteeship:

Someone may say that there are already Rotarians that have Negro blood, but if so they claim to be white and not Negro. It would be different when we go into cities where business and professional men are Negroes and do not claim to be anything else, and the bigger and the more important men they are in their local communities, the more likely it would be that they would expect to be received on an equality throughout Rotary, and they would be right in expecting it, because having admitted them to fellowship, we should manifest no discrimination against them.<sup>138</sup>

When passing as whites, light-skinned members of Rotary clubs apparently were tolerated, so long as they wore the mantle of honorary whiteness. But the prerogatives of white businessmen in the U.S. and Canada to community service were non-negotiable. With respect to Port au Prince and Kingston, RI's solution was to avoid almost all of the Caribbean Basin and West Indies well into the postwar era or else "the entire membership of the Atlanta Club would resign."<sup>139</sup> RI's civic internationalism, when kept in the abstract, affirmed a benevolent expansion of U.S. power and influence in Latin America and the Caribbean. But when challenged on matters of racial tolerance within the close-knit intimacies of their own luncheon clubs, U.S. Rotarians during the interwar years responded in close alignment with national patterns of race relations. That RI's racial policies had direct manifestations in the regional pattern of its international expansion reveals just how crucial the nexus of race, gender, and class identities were to RI's civic internationalism, but also the centrality of white supremacy and patriarchy in U.S. imperialism in moments when it seemed least visible. Like the Wilsonian vision of

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



international peace and self-determination, the contradictions of race and gender lay at the core of RI's expansive rhetoric of international engagement.<sup>140</sup>

### **“Our ambitions being fulfilled”**

The language of shared social responsibilities in RI's civic internationalism, however, did open up the possibility of overcoming some racial and national barriers for many in RI. East Asia proved the most fertile ground for RI's incorporation of exotic-peers into its fold. In Shanghai, for example, Dr. Julian Petit, the first president of the Shanghai Rotary club in 1919, had great hopes: “I have often said that I came to China as a medical missionary, and not being able to accomplish the work I had in view I entered private practice, however, if I am able to put the Rotary Club over in Shanghai, I will feel that I have accomplished equally as important a task.”<sup>141</sup> If Petit failed in bringing salvation to the “heathen” Chinese, at least he was providing something comparable in the form of spreading civic virtues. Nor was Petit alone in his great expectations. John Barrett, former U.S. diplomat in Siam, longtime Director General of the Pan American Union, and chairman of Rotary's Foreign Extension Committee in 1919, saw the establishment of the Shanghai club from a much larger perspective:

Shanghai is in many respects the key city of the whole Asiatic coast. Everybody who goes to the Orient must pass through it or visit there. There is, moreover, a wonderful opportunity for achievement in working out the ideals of Rotary. The Club may have a profound influence in that

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<sup>140</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, chapter 2, “Self-Determination for whom?”

<sup>141</sup> Dr. Julian Petit to Chesley Perry, General Secretary of Rotary International, 2 August 1922. Letter written on the official letterhead of the Shanghai Rotary Club, Shanghai Club Historical File, Vol. II, RI Archives.

way upon the future of China and the development of that kind of civilization for which Rotary stands.<sup>142</sup>

The civic internationalism of RI allowed Petit to explain his long medical career in Shanghai in personal and secular rather than religious terms, culminating in his instrumental role in establishing the Shanghai club. It also enabled Barrett to describe the swelling of U.S. business and political interests in Shanghai, China, and all of East Asia in neutral geopolitical terms like “ideals of Rotary” and “that kind of civilization for which Rotary stands.” The Open Door Policy found its non-state manifestations in such ways while the growing realities of U.S. cultural, political, and economic influence faded in and out of the white noise of the international marketplace.<sup>143</sup>

But not all shared the hopes and ambitions of Petit and Barrett. In fulfillment of Petit’s own dreams for the club, the Shanghai Rotarians’ Charities Committee established the “Rotary Mobile Clinic” upon the outbreak of war in 1937.<sup>144</sup> Two years later, Alex Potter traveled through the region as RI’s representative to investigate how the thirty-five Rotary clubs of China were managing in the midst of war with Japan. Potter, the former head of RI’s European Secretariat from 1925 – 1933, reported on the mobile clinic,

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<sup>142</sup> John Barrett, Chairman of Foreign Extension Committee to Chesley Perry, 25 July 1919, on Pan American Union letterhead. Perry forwarded Barrett’s letter to Dr. Petit, 23 September 1919. Shanghai Club Historical File, Vol. I, RI Archives.

<sup>143</sup> See Eileen P. Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China 1844 –1942* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2001) for a thorough examination of the complex business and political environment of Shanghai before World War II and how the concept of “citizenship” and its relationship to the state evolved in that same environment.

<sup>144</sup> A. Giovannini to Chesley R. Perry, 23 June 1936, with list of club committees and members. Shanghai club historical files, Vol. IV. See the same for excerpt from “Welfare Work for Needy Children. Shanghai Rotary Club’s Widespread Activities” by Robert Fan in *The Far Eastern Rotary Review*, October 1936, which recounts the details of the club’s “major charity object” of raising \$40,000 to establish a “Rotary War for Crippled Children.” The club expected the project to be “much more than local in interest, because the influence of this humanitarian work will be eventually nationwide.”

managed by Dr. H. C. Hou of the Lester Institute of Medical Research and one of thirty-eight Chinese Rotarians in the Shanghai club (out of 127 total). The clinic, set up to “administer to poor unfortunates in the Refugee Camps,” was run by volunteer doctors and nurses who were themselves refugees in their own land. From late 1937 to early 1939, the clinic provided 42,000 treatments, “regularly visiting a total refugee population of 8,000 people housed in thirteen refugee camps.”<sup>145</sup> Potter saw the clinic as confirmation of RI’s civic internationalism at its best: provision of a vital community service developed through the leadership of Chinese professionals working with their local Rotary club and in conjunction with other international voluntary associations.<sup>146</sup>

Yet, when Richard Currie, one of RI’s top international officials, visited Shanghai and Hong Kong a few months later, he saw a different picture:

During the last few days I have been asking myself whether Rotary is meant for the Orient, except perhaps in isolated cities where there is a substantial English speaking population. . . . Extension must come naturally and slowly; if it grows too fast there will be a tendency for it to develop into a Rotary-Japan or maybe Rotary-Asia. . . .

Dr. C. T. Wang has repeatedly said that the time will come when there would be 2,000 or 3,000 Rotary clubs in China. I wonder whether we should think of such a possibility for a long time to come. This visit has made me wonder whether we are not sailing in a fool’s paradise, with

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<sup>145</sup> Alex Potter, Report on trip to Asia and Europe, 4 April 1939, Shanghai Club historical file, Vol. VIII.

<sup>146</sup> One of many examples of coordination among charities occurred every Christmas with the charity committee’s annual toy drive. The “Rotary Anns,” or wives of the club members, selected the toys, which were then packaged and distributed through U.S. corporations run by Shanghai Rotarians to over 25 different charities, “from YMCA, Red Cross, and Salvation Army to local hospitals, missionary organizations, and settlement houses and beggar guilds.” Donations also came in from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the Chinese Welfare Association School, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Hebrew Relief Society, and the Russian Commercial School. The Shanghai Rotary club, much like its counterparts around the world, was supposed to operate in this fashion in fulfillment of RI’s commitment to community service. *The Pagoda*, 11 January 1934, “Report of Charity Committee for Christmas 1933,” File: “Shanghai 1926 – 1937,” Chicago One Archives.

dreams, ideals and visions of Rotary as a world-wide organization when there is not much hope of our ambitions being fulfilled in our life-time.<sup>147</sup>

A massive fault-line ran between the success of the Rotary Mobile Clinic and the “fool’s paradise” of Rotary as a “world-wide organization” that paralleled deeper tensions within the United States as its power and presence continued to grow.

Like so many other Rotary clubs outside the United States by the 1930s, the Shanghai club was much more than a cultural and political island for U.S. citizens living and working abroad. Rather, for a noteworthy Chinese Rotarian like C.T. Wang and Canadian Rotarian like Alex Potter, the scores of Rotary clubs in China in 1937 represented great hope for the future of China as it did for Petit and Barrett in 1919. C.T. Wang made his own views clear while traveling in the United States in 1936:

We have now eighty different countries or regions in which Rotary is represented.... Fellow Rotarians, let us go in, therefore, and multiply ourselves that the influence, the ideals, what we stand for in Rotary, will be a force for real world peace and world fellowship.<sup>148</sup>

For C.T. Wang, a member of the Chinese delegation to Paris in 1919 who had seen the loss of the Shantung Peninsula to the Japanese first hand, such confidence in the promises of RI’s civic internationalism required a leap of faith. But for an English Rotarian like Currie, the heavy inclusion of Chinese into so many of their own Rotary clubs was a

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<sup>147</sup> Report of Director Richard Currie, on visit to Shanghai and Hong Kong, 11 September 1939, at sea between Manila and Saigon.

<sup>148</sup> C.T. Wang was part of China’s delegation in Paris in 1919. He then served in the Senate, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and then as member of the Central Political Council of the Central Executive Committee and National Government of China through the 1920s and 1930s, and finally as ambassador to the U.S. As president of China University in Peiping (Beijing), chairman of the board of directors of the Kiaochow-Tsinan railroad, and president of the Chinese Red Cross Association as well as a graduate of the University of Michigan and Yale Law School, C.T. Wang was the perfect Chinese “native” to serve as Rotary’s first governor of all Rotary clubs in China, Hong Kong, and the Phillipines, 1935 – 37 and as a member of Rotary’s Council on Legislation, one of the highest positions in the organization’s international administration. Statement from *Proceedings, 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of RI*, Atlantic City, 22 – 26 June 1936, “What Rotary Means in My Country,” pp. 79, 99 - 103.

source of consternation, and an open invitation for RI to dissolve into a “Rotary-Japan or maybe Rotary-Asia” – an unthinkable outcome. Both in the halls of power as well as on Main Street, the question turned on what Currie meant by “our ambitions being fulfilled.” Whose ambitions? At whose expense?

Chinese members, however, were beginning to predominate in clubs outside of Shanghai by the mid-1930s. Fong Sec, the Shanghai club’s Vice President, estimated that about one in five members were Chinese, the same proportion British, and the rest Americans in 1925.<sup>149</sup> Though Fong Sec then pointed to the city’s “ever changing population” and “English language limits” as structural caps on the Shanghai club’s ability to conjoin Chinese and non-Chinese businessmen and professionals, RI went on to establish well over 30 of Rotary clubs throughout China by July, 1937.<sup>150</sup> In some of those clubs, English was not the primary language, as Chinese members began to outnumber non-Chinese members and Chinese nationals began recruiting heavily among themselves.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> According to “Report of Rotary Meeting, August 6, 1925” by Fong Sec, Club historical files, Shanghai, Vol. IV. The club roster from May 1925 lists 88 members, where 15 members have obvious Chinese surnames and businesses. Sec’s estimate was not far from the mark.

<sup>150</sup> The Shanghai club had particular success with this goal, becoming the predominant group in the Shanghai Rotary club by 1937. The nationalities of the membership of 127 broke down in the following way that year: 30% Chinese, 21.3% U.S., 18.1% British, 7.1% Japanese, 4.8% French, 3.9% German, and another eleven nationalities ranging from Swedish to Australian to Italian. Shanghai Club Historical File; Vol. IV; Official Club Membership and “Classification Survey 1936 – 37.” One of the top officers of RI in Chicago commented that “Going through the list is a very useful of education; if it were not for some such classifications as ‘Shintoism’ and ‘Taoism’ under ‘Religion,’ and some Chinese names under other majors, it would hardly differ from a list of a European or American business center.” Russell Williams to Mrs. A. Giovannini, Shanghai Rotary Club Executive Secretary; 16 December 1936; Shanghai Historical File, Vol. VII. For full account of the year’s gains and losses in Rotary clubs, see *Convention Proceedings, Twenty-Eighth Annual Convention*; 6 – 11 June 1937; Nice, France; 8. The number of Chinese Rotary clubs roughly equaled the 33 clubs in Japan. Meanwhile, the 42 Rotary clubs in Germany were abolished by December 1937, followed by dozens of others in countries allied with the Nazis: Romania, and Czechoslovakia in particular. See also De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 71.

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, club historical files for Chungking and Hankow, RI Archives.

In many ways, RI's expansion into China between 1919 and 1937 reflected RI's international growth in general during the interwar period. On the eve of the outbreak of war in East Asia, RI had managed to burrow itself into practically all major cities of the region, from Hong Kong to Harbin, from Tokyo to Chungking, and most commercial centers in between. Also, Japanese and Chinese Rotary clubs experienced similar patterns of growth and levels of success. But the nature of RI's presence was not comparable. Whereas the earliest Chinese clubs in Shanghai, Beijing, Tientsin, and Nanking began with a core of U.S./European members from transnational corporations, INGOs, and government agencies and then grew by accretion, the Japanese clubs were almost completely Japanese from the establishment of the first Rotary club in Tokyo in 1920. (Chapter 3 will explore this in greater depth.) RI's success in the Americas, Europe, and Australasia was significant as well.<sup>152</sup>

In the midst of the Neutrality Acts of the U.S. Congress and the toothless pronouncements of President Roosevelt's famous "Quarantine Speech," RI blithely continued its forays into other countries until laws or open warfare shut down their clubs.<sup>153</sup> Well before the opening shots of World War II, the institutional reach of RI was not only transnational in scope, but also increasingly cross-cultural and selectively interracial in practice.

RI appeared to be as color-blind as Wilson's rhetoric of self-determination. But RI's mission to the world meant opportunity for nations like China and Japan and total

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<sup>152</sup> Among the thirty five clubs in Mexico in 1935, for example, RI estimated that 75 – 80% of membership were "native Mexican citizens." *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention*, 17 – 21 June 1935, 150.

<sup>153</sup> In East Asia, Shanghai in particular, several clubs survived long after the start of open hostilities between China and Japan in 1937. In Latin America, in fact, World War II accelerated Rotary's expansion even more, resulting in RI's first international president from the region, Fernando Carbajal of Lima, Peru, 1942 – 43.

erasure for others like Haiti and Jamaica. RI carefully chose the exotic-peers who could enter its world fellowship. Inclusion for some came with exclusion for others. The dividing line, however, did not exactly follow the older political, racial, and cultural patterns of European colonialism because, theoretically, there was no “foreign” in Rotary’s extension. Rather, it was the identity of the male actor in the marketplace, honorable and professional, virtuous and sympathetic, civic-minded and successful, that defined the ideal global citizen for Rotary.

Yet inclusion did not entail full status. The Extension Committee captured this tension in its formal policy for the organization of the Mexico City Rotary Club in 1921. Since most of the original 30 members of the Mexico City Rotary Club that first year were U.S. or British in origin, Rotary’s leadership stipulated in a special agreement with the first Mexican club that:

1) In the selection of new and additional members, all things being equal, preference is to be given to the native Mexican, and it is further understood that a number of native Mexicans will be immediately added to the club roster.

2) It is understood that the Spanish language shall not be excluded, but shall be used when practicable and that at such meetings as may be presided over by a native Mexican, that he be encouraged to use the language of the nation, Spanish.

3) It was definitely understood that the Rotary Club of the City of Mexico must not be an American or British Colony Club – that it must not be used for the exploitation of American and British commerce, but that it is to be a Mexican Rotary Club for the benefit of the community and nation of Mexico.<sup>154</sup>

RI’s civic internationalism demanded this kind of local representation for all of its clubs.

The legitimacy of the entire project rested upon it. But could a growing representation of

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<sup>154</sup> “Memo of Agreement between Special Representative Arch C. Klumph and F.W. Teele, President of the Rotary Club of Mexico City”; undated, but very likely April/May 1921; Mexico City Club Files/Ciudad de Mexico, D.F., Mexico; RI Archives.

“native Mexicans” in the club guarantee any meaningful “benefit” to the “community and nation of Mexico”? Though the Mexico City club’s constitution provided for the preferential inclusion of local, native Mexican businessmen and professionals over any non-Mexicans of the same classification, that same club constitution also demanded complete “avoidance of politics” in all club meetings and activities.<sup>155</sup> It was one thing to welcome the business and professional elites of Mexico City into the “world fellowship,” quite another to allow the club to serve as a venue for political debate and enabler of Mexican sovereignty over and against U.S. corporate and national interests. A politically active Mexico Rotary club was as inconceivable as Mr. Currie’s “Rotary-Japan or maybe Rotary-Asia.” Like Wilsonian foreign policy, the civilizing mission of RI’s civic internationalism drew a guarded line between the high moral tones of self-determination and any political aspirations not conducive to U.S. economic and political interests.

## **Conclusion**

Though hampered by two separate outbreaks of global warfare, the advent of the Great Depression, and the rise of economic nationalisms and militarism by the late 1930s, the international expansion of Rotary clubs after 1912 represented a significant movement toward the institutionalization and normalization of international engagement between the American heartland and urban centers and emerging markets worldwide. In the name of inculcating civic cooperation in familiar, small-town terms and developing cross-border business business progressivism, RI proclaimed itself a mediator across national boundaries and cultural differences, an institutional bridge among “fellow”

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<sup>155</sup> Mexico City Rotary Club Constitution, Article III, Section 5 on “Membership” and Article VII, Section 1 on “Avoidance of Politics”; Mexico City Club Files/Ciudad de Mexico, D.F., Mexico; RI Archives.



businessmen and professionals of specific cities and distinct nations not beholden to any one government, any one corporation, any one part of the world.

Instead, RI presented itself as a kind of Esperanto for an emerging transnational class of businessmen and professionals and its civic internationalism as an apolitical, uplifting alternative to the vicissitudes of local partisanship, mere profit-making, and nationalist agendas. Service to the community – both local and international – was the touchstone of its ideology and participation in international circuits of trade the source of its institutional growth. As such, RI’s civic internationalism claimed to rise above the political because it defined its members primarily as responsible marketplace actors and its organizational mission beyond the purview of the state – any state. Rotary International sought to operate with a strategic distance from both states and markets as only an international non-governmental organization could do. The strategy became a fundamental feature of the ever-expanding number of non-governmental organizations that have come to populate the global community over the course of the twentieth century. In that sense, RI formed only one part of a growing trend of NGOs moving in, around, through, and despite state structures and policies over the same period. But not all NGOs have the same relationships to states and markets. The boundaries are rarely discrete and always dependent on circumstances. In the case of RI, however, blurring boundaries between states and markets ultimately developed into a complex weaving and dodging among empires and imperialisms, races and cultures, nations and industries as Rotary clubs “girdled the globe” during the interwar period. In this manner, Rotary also became a useful means of entry for U.S. corporate and state interests as their employees and agents joined their local Rotary clubs both inside and outside the United States,

attended weekly luncheons, spoke at club and public events, and mingled with their families at intimate social events and charitable activities.

As an informal, non-state, philanthropic form of cultural diplomacy among business and professional elites, RI's civic internationalism helped build the institutional and ideological foundations for postwar U.S. global hegemony in its most conducive terms: the denial of empire woven into the daily business of empire. While the tenets of American exceptionalism and the market-hungry expansion of U.S. corporate capitalism were in tension long before "the Great War" as well as long after, it was during the interwar years that a workable synergy developed between the two. Though President Wilson's vision of collective security never materialized during that period, Arch Klumph's vision of international engagement unfolded much according to plan.

## **Chapter 2: “The Elimination of Differences”: Main Street Meets Tokyo**

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The Dominion of Canada and the British Isles gave way to the crusaders' demands. Paris is ours and today the slogan is 'On to Berlin, Vienna, then to the Antipodes.' Like those of the Napoleonic forces, the ambitions of our conquest know no limitations save the limitations of the civilized world. Unlike the conquest of the Napoleonic forces, our conquest is, and will continue to be, in the interests of men and the principles which make for the practical idealization of trade.... Rotarianism thrives in all places where men think and where men's hearts are large enough to include the cares of others.

Paul P. Harris, Founder of Rotary International, 1912.<sup>156</sup>

### **Introduction**

When Umekichi Yoneyama took the stage at Rotary International's annual convention in Dallas in May 1929, it was like a homecoming for him. As the godfather of all Rotary clubs in Japan since 1920 and as a top industrial and financial leader from Tokyo, Yoneyama embodied the exotic-peer imagined by RI's civic internationalism. He addressed his fellow Rotarians as “this great parliament of business and professional men of the world” and then recounted how Dallas was “where I saw...the light of truth in Rotary some nine years ago.”<sup>157</sup> Another Rotarian, Herbert Harris, English professor from Whittier College, California, spoke moments before Yoneyama on the same theme. As Vice Chairman of RI's International Service Committee in 1928 – 29, Harris was

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<sup>156</sup> Annual Report of President Paul P. Harris, *The Rotarian*, Vol. III, September 1912, 19.

<sup>157</sup> *Convention Proceedings, Twentieth Annual Convention*; Dallas, Texas; 27 – 31 May 1929; 430 – 431.

responsible for putting the rhetoric of RI's civic internationalism into practice. After describing how they were all "living in a new world...a small world of close neighborhood," Harris told his audience of a fellow Rotarian from a club located "two thousand miles from an international border" who had asked him "what can my little club possibly do to better international relations?"<sup>158</sup>

The pairing of Yoneyama and Harris as speakers brought together the two extremes of RI's civic internationalism: the heartland and the abroad, small town America and a massive commercial hub of East Asia. Harris's answer to the small-town Rotarian was simple: "By a program of education that begins at home,...not by entering into politics but by cultivating the spirit of friendship and understanding in its members,...and then sending them out to spread that spirit among other people." Were it not for the remarkable success of Yoneyama's Rotary clubs in Japan and RI's presence in dozens of other nations around the world, Harris's advice might have rung hollow. But they were in Dallas, 1929. RI's civic internationalism was at its height – and the world was theirs to conquer.

Within a dozen years, the United States and the Japanese Empire clashed over the future of the Pacific Rim, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. By 1940, all forty-four Japanese Rotary clubs were extinguished and by 1945, practically all of Japan's urban centers and industrial base devastated by total warfare. Meanwhile, U.S. Rotarians girded up for the war effort much as they had in the prior war to end all wars only to find themselves forming part of an emerging permanent war economy in the United States.<sup>159</sup> The "spirit

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 423 – 425.

<sup>159</sup> On the emergence of a postwar permanent war economy, see Ann Markusen, *The Rise of the Sunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic*

of friendship and understanding” among Rotarians like Harris and Yoneyama, such a compelling vision for international peace in Dallas, 1929, melted in the heat of imperial collisions. But before and after the U.S.-Japanese conflict, RI’s civic internationalism served its purposes well.

This chapter and the following explore the fundamental paradox in how the United States has projected itself in the world through violence and benevolence. The interwar experiences and parallels between the Rotary clubs of Wichita and Tokyo in particular serve as case studies in the nature of this paradox. Just as key businessmen, contractors, and corporate leaders of both cities were trying to construct institutional mechanisms of international exchange and deliberation long before Pearl Harbor, so were they actively involved by 1940 in each nation’s preparation for and prosecution of war. After the First World War, there was a time when “conquering” was metaphorical in meaning for the business classes in cities like Wichita. Similarly, there was a time when Tokyo’s industrial leaders could see themselves in friendly alignment with the interests and growth of the United States in the Pacific.<sup>160</sup>

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*Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938 – 1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). For a social, political, and cultural approach to the same topic, see Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and for good analysis of the evolution of the aviation industry in the same context, see idem., *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>160</sup> Sadao Asada, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New, 1918 – 1922: The Washington System and the Origins of Japanese-American Rapprochement,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April 2006), 211 – 230. On the “era of good feelings” from 1922 – 31, see Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan, and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919 – 1945* (London: Routledge, 2002); Ian Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002); and Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relation, Vol. III, The Globalizing of America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 73 – 115, for review of diplomatic relations from outside the perspective of U.S.-Japanese relations and Masamichi Royama, *Foreign Policy of Japan: 1914 – 1939* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), reprinted version, for a Japanese perspective from the period.

These two chapters map out some of the contours of this transformation by examining what these cities' Rotary clubs did and said, what they hoped for and expected from each other as part of RI's "world fellowship," and how and why they imagined their worlds to be moving in such easy convergence during the interwar years. The civic internationalism of Rotarians like Harris and Yoneyama was an attempt to smooth over the "imperialist logic of difference" at the core of East vs. West and to replace it with the more palatable "logic of affiliation" that became such a predominant theme in postwar U.S. foreign policy. In that sense, the worldwide expansion of Rotary clubs during the interwar years foreshadowed the middlebrow turn toward the international in the postwar era.<sup>161</sup>

Rotary's civic internationalism furthered the myth of the United States as an inherently benevolent presence in the world and contributed to the "ideology of global interdependence."<sup>162</sup> Longstanding sentimental notions of uniquely American voluntarism and community service and Progressive Era notions of modern business standards and practices lay at the core of Rotary's sense of mission to the world. This ideological centerpiece of Main Street's business culture becomes a useful means of capturing revealing moments of U.S. projections of "soft power," precisely in moments when America can best claim to be uplifting other peoples and nations. But that soft power is deeply imbricated in very real projections of economic, military, and political "hard" power. The hard and the soft cannot be disentangled.<sup>163</sup> Understanding better how

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<sup>161</sup> Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 2003), 1 – 17, for use of phrases in quotation marks.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> The notion of soft vs. hard power receives particular treatment in Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004) and David Held and Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, eds., *American Power in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge, UK:

the United States operated as a global hegemon in the postwar era requires a better grasp of the internal logic of this paradox of violence and benevolence – indeed, the unraveling of that paradox. A closer look at the civic internationalism of the Wichita Rotary club during the first half of the twentieth century is a useful step in that direction.

### **“The Wichita Plan”**

When Harry W. Stanley, a thirty-one year old native of Wichita, Kansas and representative of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa, went to Chicago in the summer of 1911 to attend his company’s convention, he heard about a new kind of club for businessmen called “Rotary” from a fellow insurance agent and conventioneer from Des Moines. After meeting with the club’s founder, Paul Harris, on the same trip to Chicago, Stanley returned to Wichita eager to start his very own Rotary club. It was just the ticket for a prairie town full of upstart businessmen and entrepreneurs seeking legitimacy from a great metropolis like Chicago – the paragon of intercontinental commerce and rapid urban expansion.<sup>164</sup>

So the son of Kansas Governor William E. Stanley (1899 to 1903) set about galvanizing support among his friends and peers and, within the month, over seventy of them had signed on to the new club and its primary goal: “that the important men of all nations should ‘know about Wichita, Kansas, U.S.A., and the products we raise, mill, and manufacture.’”<sup>165</sup> Harry Stanley and company meant to put Wichita on the map – not just

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Polity, 2004). While these texts consider “soft power” in light of postwar and post-9/11 international affairs, the terms may still apply in this analysis as well.

<sup>164</sup> As an imperial city within the confines of the United States and North America, see William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

<sup>165</sup> As quoted in Joyce Suellentrop, *Rotary Club of Wichita, Kansas: The First Seventy-Five Years, 1911 – 1986* (Wichita, Kan.: Rotary Club of Wichita, 1986), 1 – 3.

within the national economy of the U.S., but in the international as well. It was not a stretch of the imagination for Stanley. After four years at Columbia University and a couple traveling through Europe, Harry had already traveled far beyond the long, flat horizons of his native Wichita by 1905.

But just as Harry's own experience did not stop at Wichita's city limits, neither did his commitment to his new Rotary club. His drive to bring the first club to the state of Kansas in 1911 was clearly part of a greater mission to forge a metropolitan center out of the wheat fields, cattle ranches, and oil wells of south central Kansas. A businessmen's service club networking with similar clubs in North America was one way to move things along. Not only was he, therefore, the founder and first president of the thirtieth club to join the National Association of Rotary Clubs, he was also Vice-President of the national association in 1912 – 13, when it more than doubled in size and became the *International* Association of Rotary Clubs thanks to the creation of Rotary clubs in Canada and the United Kingdom that same year. Though he, as Vice-President, did not have a direct hand in the creation of any of those clubs outside the United States, Stanley was well aware of the international context in which his own city and its new service club found itself and how he might use this new businessmen's club to his beloved city's advantage. Wichita was a city to be reckoned with: a city on the move. Like Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Boston, Seattle, and many other major U.S. cities, it now had a Rotary club. With the Canadians and British mixed in, it was a fast growing international club. The opportunities were endless.

On the local level, meanwhile, the newly minted Wichita Rotarians figured that “before the Club could serve the public, the Club had to become familiar with its



members and their businesses.” Stanley understood that developing trust among the civic leaders of Wichita came before developing the city of Wichita. To that end, the first year’s bi-weekly dinners focused on members speaking on their particular line of business or profession. In accord with one of the key institutional goals of all other Rotary clubs, the Wichita Rotarians were learning the methods, standards, and procedures of their fellow members’ businesses and professions. What exactly did a real estate agent do and why? How were farm loans given out? What was the latest in adding machines, dentistry, automobiles and supplies, wholesale electric wares? There were over seventy distinct professions and types of business within the club to learn about and to learn from while new members from other distinct “classifications” of industry and commerce were regularly joining the growing club as well. Each Rotarian’s expertise in his own specific trade or profession became a given meeting’s topic of discussion. Every member had his chance in the limelight to enlighten his fellow members on the importance and dynamism of his own particular line of work. Having each member speak before the club on his own specialty also gave him the chance to hone his skills at public speaking while serving on club committees that became a laboratory for developing organizational and managerial skills. As with Rotary clubs in other cities, however, “scientizing acquaintances” among the city’s leading business and professional classes had other practical benefits: getting to know fellow Rotarians meant getting to know potential clients and allies. Friendship in business meant networking, which translated into personal and commercial success.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> For a significant treatment of the concept of social capital in the world of business and specifically on Rotary International, see Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 87 – 91. While Laird is correct to treat RI as the vanguard of service clubs (Lions, Kiwanis, National Exchange, Optimists, etc.) and as a mainstream movement of middle class businessmen in the U.S. before World War II, she overlooks the international aspects of RI. There is no reason why the

By 1914, developing that sense of friendship and fraternity moved to a whole new level under Gifford Booth, Sr. (1891 – 1952), manager of the Grit Printing Company and the club’s second president. Members were divided into groups of ten and then given various wholesale businesses to visit and report on to the entire club. The club repeated the process months later, only with a focus on manufacturing companies.<sup>167</sup> As with many clubs during this period, the Wichita club sought to function as a kind of right arm to the city’s chamber of commerce by serving as a common ground for social interaction among those who would also be typical members of the chamber.<sup>168</sup> Learning about other members’ industries and professions went well beyond the social space of the club’s meetings in swank downtown hotels by requiring all members to visit Wichita’s factories, shops, and stores and report on their findings. Generating a sense of solidarity, civic identity, and common purpose among the Wichita Rotarians in the club’s early years also had a practical purpose: to convince Rotary’s headquarters in Chicago that the Wichita club could and should host one of the upcoming annual international conventions. Hosting a gathering of thousands of fellow Rotarian businessmen and professionals and many of their wives from cities throughout the U.S. and Canada would have been a booster’s paradise – a consummate opportunity to show off Wichita’s entrepreneurial prowess and make a lot of money while doing it. When five trains filled with Rotarians were passing through Wichita on their way to their convention in Houston in June 1914, Gifford Booth seized the opportunity.

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fundamental dynamics of social capital – bridging and bonding – cannot operate across political borders just as business itself does.

<sup>167</sup> Suellentrop, *Rotary Club of Wichita*, 4.

<sup>168</sup> Club reports in the 1920s and 30s, for example, often claim 70 – 90% of their membership also belongs to the town or city’s chamber of commerce.

As the trains arrived in Wichita in the early morning hours, the hundreds of traveling Rotarians were met with about 200 Wichitans in their cars, given a tour of the city, and then provided breakfast at the Scottish Rite Temple by the women of the Ivy Leaf Chapter Order of Eastern Star. Rotarians like Giff Booth had social connections well beyond the chamber of commerce and knew how to use them to great effect. In this case, Giff Booth was just the man to pull off “one of [Wichita’s] greatest advertising stunts.”<sup>169</sup> As an active leader in the Masons, president of the Board of Education, director of the Wichita Chamber of Commerce for sixteen years, active member of the Salvation Army Board for over thirty years, fundraiser for his Central Christian Church, member of the legislation committee of the National Red Cross, and chairman of the Sedgwick County War Funds Association and the State Jewish-American campaign during WWI, Giff Booth, Sr. embodied the multi-faceted nature of civic involvement that the Rotary club idealized. More than mere a booster, Booth was an active civic leader his whole life.

Nor were Stanley and Booth alone in this regard. The Wichita Rotarians’ boosterism and civic activities were all of a piece. When Henry J. Allen, owner of the *Wichita Beacon*, began pushing hard for a Commission-Manager form of municipal government in early 1916, he turned to the Rotary club as a potential ally in the effort. It was a smart move. The club set up a committee to investigate the issue. With that committee’s endorsement, the club began moving ahead. There were two obstacles to overcome in order to bring the city-manager form of government to Wichita: an enabling act by the Kansas State Legislature and then approval by Wichita residents through a

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<sup>169</sup> This according to Will Price, president of Wichita Business College, owner of Wichita’s first Ford dealership from 1916 to 1952, and the third president of Wichita’s Rotary club in 1914 – 15. See Suellentrop, *Rotary Club of Wichita*, 4 – 5.

special election. Recognizing that they would need support from other cities for their initiative in the legislature, the Wichita Rotarians called a meeting of fellow Rotarians from Topeka, Hutchinson, and Parsons while they were all attending Rotary's annual convention in Cincinnati in 1916.

On their return home to Kansas, the Wichita members also met with J.M. Switzer, executive for the National Cash Register Company in Dayton, Ohio and also its City Commissioner, and convinced him to speak at all the Kansas Rotary clubs on the virtues of that form of city government. Switzer, armed with "stereopticon views" provided by NCR, was already a regular speaker on the topic throughout the country. He was more than happy to oblige since relations between NCR and Rotary clubs were already both national and international in scope. With both the *Wichita Eagle* and the *Wichita Beacon* publishing favorable articles on the topic, the club then garnered support from Robert Stone, a former legislator from Topeka and District Governor for all Rotary clubs in Kansas; Lieutenant Governor W. T. Morgan; and R. L. Holmes, attorney and active Rotarian. Meanwhile, the club continued to beat the drum in support of the change in city government. Wichita's club president at the time, Dr. Ernest Seydell, eagerly pointed out that "opposition was supplied in abundance by the city hall crowd and the old time politicians." Dr. D. F. Garland joined in the rhetoric against the vices of city hall when he spoke at the club in December, 1916, and promised a "harmonization of democracy and efficiency" through a city manager system of municipal government.<sup>170</sup> In the end, the enabling law finally passed as the Nightswonger Bill. The Wichita Rotarians' visit to the Cincinnati convention and active recruiting of other Kansas clubs

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<sup>170</sup> Suellentrop, Rotary Club of Wichita, Kansas, p. ??

in support of their legislative goal had paid off. For men like Stanley and Booth, Wichita was halfway to bringing its city government in line with modern business practices and progressive reform movements. For a city with national and international aspirations, there was no other option.

Getting their fellow Wichita citizens to pass the measure in an election was another matter, requiring different measures. Reflecting national trends toward the use of the referendum, recall, and initiative in local and state politics, the Wichita Rotarians canvassed house to house to get signatures for their petition for a special election on the matter. The club turned to their wives and to the General Women's Federation of Clubs for help in the canvassing and managed to capture the 5,000 signatures needed to bring about the special election. The club also deployed speakers throughout Wichita, such as club member Dr. Walter Scott Priest, pastor of Central Church of Christ, who promised "a marked decrease in crime" and "the elevation of the moral tone of the city...." Meanwhile, several key Rotarians took over the Law and Order League and transformed it into the Greater Wichita Civic League, which then endorsed seven of the seventeen candidates for city commissioner, canvassed the city's precincts, and worked on get-out-the-vote activities on election day, 3 April 1917. Five new city commissioners were voted into office that day: two of whom were already Rotarians while the other three joined up by mid-summer 1917 – along with Louis R. Ash, Wichita's first City Manager. By all accounts, including Ash's, the Wichita Rotarians were the primary agents in bringing about the city manager-commission form of government.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Suellentrop, *Rotary Club of Wichita*, 7 – 8.

That the whole process was typical of municipal politics in the Progressive Era is precisely the point. How the service club overcame political and legislative obstacles helps us locate the organization within the national context of progressive politics and business progressivism after 1910. But how the club managed the process and why it supported the Commission-Manager form of government also reveals the club's move toward a supposed apolitical stance toward civic responsibility as the corporate ethos of managerial liberalism deepened its roots in American society during that period. Just as the new middle classes asserted their reform agendas on the local and national level during the Progressive Era, so the Wichita Rotary club blended the language of managerial efficiency, professional expertise, and modern business practices in the name of a new, more responsible form of city government. As with so many other cities in the U.S. before and after, the detached nature of the expert and the professionalism of the manager became the modern alternative to the decadence of city hall's political chicanery.

Reform agendas imbued with modern business practices, therefore, enabled certain types of political involvement even as they enhanced the pretense of non-partisanship and dispassionate community leadership and development. In its first issue in September 1916, the Wichita club's monthly newspaper trumpeted the belief that politics "does not enter into Rotary" and pledged to ban political discussion from its pages. Overt partisanship would be below them.<sup>172</sup> The Wichita Rotarians' boosterism,

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<sup>172</sup> On the transition from party politics to professional politics during this period, see Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870 – 1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003) and Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism; A Re-Interpretation of American History, 1900 – 1916* (New York: Free Press, 1963) as a classic view on the function of business interests shaping state structures for conservative rather than genuinely progressive ends.

as such, dovetailed well with both its apolitical posturing and its civic projects. The same recipe also applied to other major club activities in the club's early years such as the Liberty Loan Drives, the City Beautiful Movement, and the creation of playgrounds. Civic leadership had to be of a disinterested and altruistic nature. It was the core of their legitimacy. It was also the key to their political agenda – claims to non-partisanship notwithstanding.

By 1925, the Wichita club had long since moved beyond the building of playgrounds, fundraising for the war effort, and improving municipal governance just as Rotary itself had blossomed into a rapidly growing international institution with clubs in about twenty-eight countries and commonwealths around the world. From Stanley and Booth's perspective, why should state and national boundaries limit Wichita's reach into the emerging world of international business?

To that end, the club sent a form letter to all other Rotary clubs in the United States – about 1,600 in total – inviting them to support what soon became known as “The Wichita Plan.” Much like the club's own program a decade earlier for educating themselves on each other's lines of business and Wichita's own industrial base, the Wichita club had divided its 200 + membership into twenty groups of about ten members in order to study “some one foreign country along peace lines.” The Wichita plan's immediate goal was to examine most of the countries where Rotary clubs had already been established as part of a “movement for World Peace, launched by Business and Professional men, who through their affiliation with Commerce and Science represent the great majority...free of sectarian or political complexities....”<sup>173</sup> Each member “was

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<sup>173</sup> Form letter of the Wichita, Kansas Rotary Club to the Rotary Clubs of the United States, 14 May 1925, duplicated in the Wichita Rotary Club's publication, *Round and Round*, Vol X, No.

assigned an aspect of the life” of a given country and each group, after several months of study, was to report its overall findings on its assigned country to the club as a whole during one of their weekly meetings “either through pageantry, speeches, papers, or the spoken word of a native of the country where possible.”<sup>174</sup> The long term goal of the Wichita Plan, however, was the club’s old desire to convince RI’s headquarters in Chicago and its convention committee, comprised of Rotarians from various countries by 1925, that the Wichita club could and should host an international convention – a goal held by scores of other clubs both inside and outside the United States.

The boosters’ dream of Wichita packed with thousands of fellow tradesmen from all over the world had only intensified since Giff Booth’s 1914 breakfast for several trainloads of Rotarians *en route* to Houston. With these ends in mind, the club drafted a resolution for the 1925 convention in Cleveland that RI “inaugurate ... a campaign of Education for the definite study of International Peace” so that “Rotary may be of service to mankind in doing its part to bring about World Peace.”<sup>175</sup> RI sought to tap into and build upon the growing interconnectivity and contact among businessmen and professionals by serving as an institutional link, a common thread, between such disparate cities as Tokyo and Wichita. The Wichita Rotarians understood this as well, and tried take full advantage of RI’s offices.

But the Wichitans never won their convention. Ultimately, the Wichita club withdrew its resolution at the Cleveland convention in 1925 in favor of a broader

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20, 16 May 1925, Guy Gundaker Papers; File “Rotary General - Notes on Convention at Pittsburgh”, RI Archives. See also, “Meeting of the Extension Committee, July 28 – 30, 1925, Chicago”, File “Committee – Extension – 1925 – 29”, RI Archives.

<sup>174</sup> Form letter from above.

<sup>175</sup> *Convention Proceedings, Sixteenth Annual Convention*; Cleveland, Ohio; June 1925; Resolution # 19, and Wichita Rotary Club bulletin, *Round and Round*, 16 May 1925, Guy Gundaker Papers, File: [“Rotary General – Notes on Convention at Pittsburgh”], RI Archives.



resolution that included ethical business practices, boys' work in the community, and worldwide expansion of Rotary. RI's Committee on Extension and its Board of Directors, however, both claimed total support for the "sentiment" and goals of the Wichita Plan and then proved it when RI highlighted the Wichita plan for its approximately 100,000 readers in its monthly magazine, *The Rotarian*.<sup>176</sup> Everything about the Wichita Plan was emblematic of RI's internationalist goals. As artful boosters, the Wichita Rotarians designed it that way.

The Wichita Rotarians were not alone in pushing something like a Wichita Plan. In 1926, the Whittier, California Rotary club managed to get unanimous support from the delegates representing all 130 clubs in its district (mostly the state of California) on their proposed resolution that "provides for a committee to suggest the programs and the methods of education in international understanding for which so many clubs are asking." Recognizing that "other forces are working among women and children to improve international relations," the Whittier Club argued that "Rotary speaks directly to the only power which can stop war and maintain peace, BUSINESS. Every week in all the principal cities of the United States and in many of those in thirty-four other nations, Rotary mobilizes leading business and professional men."<sup>177</sup> The Whittier Club saw its

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<sup>176</sup> *The Rotarian*, August 1925, 37.

<sup>177</sup> John G. Swain, President, Whittier Rotary Club, to all U.S. Rotary clubs, 12 May 1926, Guy Gundaker Papers, File: ["Rotary General – Notes on Convention at Pittsburgh"], RI Archives. The real impetus behind the Whittier Club's emphasis on improving international relations was Herbert E. Harris, Professor of English at Whittier College, and chairman of the "Sixth Object Committee" – soon renamed by RI the "international service committee" for all clubs. RI's sixth object, first formally adopted in 1922 and later renamed the fourth object, was: "The advancement of understanding, good will, and international peace through a world fellowship of business and professional men united in the Rotary ideal of Service." Herbert Harris eventually ascended to the chair of RI's International Service Committee for the entire organization in 1929 – 30. The other four members of the International Service Committee under Harris were: Ernesto Aguilar (plate glass distributing) of Mexico City, Mexico; Joseph Caulder (dairy

peace proposal as part of a general trend toward “bettering international relations,” but more important was the club’s belief that the solidarity within its expanding international network of business and professional peers was the key to world peace. The principal driver behind the Whitter club’s activities was Herbert Harris. As a professor at a college established by Quakers in 1887, Harris was familiar with international peace initiatives from a religious perspective. Within two years, Harris was a top official in RI’s “international service committee.”

In the world of Rotary International, it seemed only natural to project its voluntaristic, associational model of governance and economic citizenship in the U.S. beyond its borders. The logic was simple: just as the competition of nations brought only war, so the marketplace of free trade and commerce could alone transcend national rivalry and provide enduring peace. Trade links and business standards trumped the pettiness of political disputes and the meddling of state regulators. Whether it was replacing a corrupt city hall with a professional city manager or the secretive diplomacy of the Old World with open negotiations, modern business – be it local or international in scope – was an apolitical, transparent, dispassionate force for good. The boys in cities as far apart as Tokyo and Wichita could both agree: The virtues of an international marketplace, not the vicissitudes of nation-states, were the hope of future stability and cooperation in the world. Though the term “globalization” was yet to come, the foundations were already there. And the world of Main Street was making its own contributions.

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financing) of Toronto, Canada; L. R. Grote (physician) of Frankfurt, Germany; and H. Norton Matthews (public school) of Birstol, England. *Convention Proceedings; Dallas, Texas; 27 – 31 May 1929*, 549.

## **Civic Internationalism – Wichita Style**

Why would over two hundred Rotarians in Wichita, Kansas in 1925 be so committed to learning about all other countries where Rotary clubs existed? More importantly, how and why did they expect to welcome many more countries into their fellowship in the coming years? Though boosterism clearly played a key role, the answer is much more complex and more revealing. The imagined connections between Wichita and the twenty-eight countries where RI had a presence in 1925 reflected emerging networks of communication, transportation, and commerce at all levels on a global scale throughout the twentieth century. In one sense, the story was rather mundane: Harry Stanley of Kansas hears of Rotary while at a convention of insurance salesmen in Chicago and decided to start his own club in his hometown. But the activities of so many other businessmen like Stanley and their many chamber-of-commerce brethren within the logic of RI's civic internationalism demonstrated their support for expansion of U.S. interests abroad – both economic and cultural.

Though their understanding of international cooperation and peace was fraught with contradictions, their contributions along those lines were significant. For instance, how was it possible for the Whittier club in 1926 to convince well over one hundred fellow Rotary clubs of the importance of “bettering international relations” through stronger business contacts outside the U.S. when, at the same time, the state of California was brimming with anti-immigrant sentiment? On the other hand, when Tokyo Rotarians like Yoneyama visited the United States, they were supposed to be treated well during their business trips because they represented something new and important to their fellow Rotarians in the United States. RI's “parliament of businessmen” promised a world of

international business exchange on a level playing field among like-minded business and professionals who saw no contradictions between profit-making, corporate capitalism, and private philanthropy – so long as reasonable men maintained reasonable control over their direction of their economic development. But this managerial view of international business relations, of harmony and cooperation among the business and professional ranks of the world’s commercial centers, required some fleshing out. While RI’s “parliament of businessmen” had its contradictions, it also had genuine appeal for non-U.S. members.

In the case of the Tokyo and Wichita clubs, how did they converge and then collide during the interwar period? In terms of convergence, RI’s civic internationalism emphasized standardization of business practices, the establishment of codes of ethics in professional and trade associations, the “classification principle” for control of access to membership according to business and professional identities, and the capacities of a transnational class of businessmen to place all philanthropic endeavors above the interests of any given person, corporation, or nation. But RI’s civic internationalism went further by combining the components above with the boosterism and civic activism of men like Stanley, Booth, and their Japanese counterparts.

RI’s “ideal of service” provided the moral framework for its civic internationalism as it melded the worlds of business internationalism with local boosterism, some forms of progressive political activism with civic development, and philanthropic cooperation with individual effort – all in the name of service to the community. That “community” was a multi-faceted term open to a variety of interpretations was crucial. The term could refer to a club’s local environs, to a member’s

business and professional peers, to a town's regional interests and pride, to a national and even patriotic agenda, and to the international community loosely defined. RI developed and then harnessed its service ideology through particular institutional innovations after 1910 with real success.<sup>178</sup> Like the Wilsonian tendencies of U.S. foreign policy, RI's civic internationalism has proven durable because Wilsonianism and RI's civic internationalism shared a deep abiding faith in the moral imperatives of U.S. international engagement; in the messianic sense of mission through uplift and compassion; in the disinterested nature of American involvement abroad; and in the universal nature of American social, political, and economic institutions. Businessmen in the United States could grasp and build upon such principles.

In this vein, the Wichita Rotary club helps expose the exceptionalist pretensions of the United States as a "reluctant" empire. RI consistently saw its growth worldwide not only as one of its chief organizational objectives and crowning achievements, but as a measure of the associational "genius" of American civil society all wrapped up in one organizational package and ready for export as a gift from the U.S. to the world.<sup>179</sup> As such, the organization serves as a natural experiment – a concerted effort to send America's best into the world of international business before World War II. Similarly, the Tokyo Club had its own interpretations and uses of RI's civic internationalism. How and why did cities like Wichita and Tokyo imagine the possibilities of a common ground through their affiliated Rotary clubs and then go about making that happen.?

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<sup>178</sup> See chapter 1, section "Service is the basis for all business," for examination of RI's service ideology and its relationship to RI's civic internationalism.

<sup>179</sup> For similar views from the period on the Red Cross, see "Address of President Wilson opening the campaign in New York for the Second Red Cross Fund," 18 May 1918, Government Printing Office, 1918 and "Address of President Hoover on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the American National Red Cross," 21 May 1931, Government Printing Office, 1931.

## **The Heartland Abroad – Wichita Style**

The Wichita Rotarians copied than just the city-manager form of government from their Dayton counterparts. Like Dayton, Wichita played a vital role in the rise of the aviation industry in the United States. But in the case of Wichita, the aviation industry eventually became the city's core identity as "the Air Capital of the world." An important first step in the city's self-transformation from a fading prairie town on the Chisholm Trail to a center of innovation in flight was an air meet at Walnut Grove in northwest Wichita in May, 1911.<sup>180</sup> The meet, well advertised beforehand, featured four professional Curtiss aviators and attracted some 18,000 people. Unlike other air shows of the period, however, the event was more than just entertainment. Under the sponsorship of local businessman Orville A. Boyle, the air meet succeeded in demonstrating the practicality of "aeroplanes" as a means of transportation.

The large, flat, open prairies of Kansas and the constant flow of south winds into the region were an ideal setting for early aviators. And for a city still reeling from the economic shocks of the 1890s, such conditions might translate into a significant business opportunity. Even in 1911, *The Wichita Eagle* was already boosting aviation as Wichita's destiny: "The aeroplane is unreal to Wichita...until we see it soar over our own local habitat. Then by such a first-event, the aeroplane is ours, and we are of the aeroplane age."<sup>181</sup> The summer of 1911 brought Wichita its first real taste of aviation as its industrial future thanks in large part to Boyle. A few months later, Harry Stanley

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<sup>180</sup> Jay Price, "Cowboy Boosterism: Old Cowtown Museum and the Image of Wichita, Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 24:4 (Winter 2001), 301 – 317 and Jay M. Price, *Wichita's Legacy of Flight* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 11.

<sup>181</sup> Quoted in Frank Rowe and Craig Miner, *Borne on the South Wind: A Century of Kansas Aviation* (Newton, Ks.: Mennonite Press, 1994), 29.

returned from Chicago convinced of Wichita's pressing need for a Rotary club. Orville A. Boyle eventually joined Stanley's new service club and became its president in 1925 – 26, when he pushed hard for RI's adoption of "The Wichita Plan" for all Rotary clubs in the world. Whether selling Wichitans on the future of aviation or RI's Board of Directors on Wichita as a convention city, Orville Boyle knew how to promote a good business idea and make it a reality.<sup>182</sup>

But it took more than just promotional skills to get the aviation industry firmly rooted in Wichita. The development of the technical and entrepreneurial skills of early Kansas aviators like A.K. Longren and Clyde Cessna and the nascent technologies of the 1910s into an industrial sector by the 1920s and 1930s required available capital. Both Longren and Cessna understood this when they sought military contracts in the opening phases of World War I. But to no avail.<sup>183</sup> Fortunately, the El Dorado oil boom had hit the region, reaching maximum oil production just as the U.S. entered and fought "The Great War" in Europe. Skyrocketing demand for oil in a time of war resulted in a surplus of local capital.<sup>184</sup> One of the largest beneficiaries of the boom was "Jake" Moellendick, who became a passionate investor in aviation in May 1919 after being flown in a plane to one of his wells by a young lieutenant and West Point graduate named Julius Earl Schaefer (future president of Boeing – Wichita and director of its massive Plant #2 during World War II).

Within weeks Wichita saw the birth of several airplane companies and within a few years the establishment of a whole new industry brimming with promise. The

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<sup>182</sup> Rowe and Miner, *Borne on the South Wind*, 29 – 41.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>184</sup> Developments in broom-corn warehousing and marketing also added to the pool of available capital. Ibid, 59.

Wichita Aircraft Company, chartered only two months after Moellendick's first flight with Schaefer, got financing from Moellendick and several other Wichita businessmen, including George Siedhoff, president of his own concrete construction firm and longtime, active member of the Wichita Rotary club. The aircraft company, after starting over in partnership with Emil "Matty" Laird of Chicago, eventually became the incubator for private aviation in Wichita, producing the likes of Walter Beech and Lloyd Stearman and their respective aircraft companies.<sup>185</sup> In the end, aviation in Wichita missed the stimulus of war production until orders for military aircraft began in the late 1930s in anticipation of another war. Instead, for the business community of Wichita during the interwar years, the growth of aviation was to be a mostly private affair. For the Rotary club of Wichita and RI's civic internationalism, that was as it should be. Like its philanthropic endeavors, Wichita's future was supposed to emerge from private sector investments.

Along with plenty of local money looking for investment, the war years also meant a surfeit of trained military pilots in the U.S. and cross-fertilization of aviation technology across the Atlantic. And there was plenty of local interest in attracting those pilots and that technology to Wichita and its competing cities. As a result, when the aviation committee of the Wichita Chamber of Commerce bought farmland just outside the city limits for a new landing field in 1919, it publicized the event with the Victory Liberty Loan Flying Circus. Using techniques from war propaganda and showcasing ace pilots and their warplanes, the Flying Circus featured mock aerial engagements and "bombing" of the city of Wichita with 20,000 copies of the *Wichita Eagle* newspaper so

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<sup>185</sup> Beech and Stearman combined in 1925 to form Travel Air Manufacturing Co., where Cessna was vice president. A year later Stearman left for Venice, California, but returned in 1927 to create Stearman Aircraft Co., where he was president and general. In 1929, Boeing of Seattle bought Stearman Aircraft, forming what became known as Boeing – Wichita by 1941.



that “the people of this city will be able to get something of the feeling of the way actual battle conditions were carried out.”<sup>186</sup> At least 25,000 came out to the new airfield to see the “bombings” and aerial combat while the rest of the city was treated to much the same whether they wanted to see it or not. Though the Great War in Europe had not directly spurred growth in the field of aviation for Wichita, it did help bring back prosperity to the city and the region in its wake. By 1919, major breakthroughs in flight made during the war were becoming a source of entertainment as much as a business opportunity for the new era. There was no reason the two could not be combined.

*The Wichita Eagle*, in fact, was more involved in the day’s activities than just serving as “bombs.” Marcellus Murdock, part of the family that had been publishing the newspaper since the 1890s and soon to become its head of publishing, was the chair of the 100 member aviation committee set up by Wichita’s Chamber of Commerce and responsible for the day’s events.<sup>187</sup> He was also an active member of the Wichita Rotary Club, even to the point of establishing clubs in other Kansas cities.<sup>188</sup> Like so many of his fellow Rotarians, Murdock belonged to other social and booster clubs as well.<sup>189</sup> Though the Wichita Rotary club had a particular devotion to making a success out of aviation, other organizations contributed as well. The Kiwanis club of El Dorado, Kansas,

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<sup>186</sup> Rowe and Miner, 57 – 58. Quotation taken from *The Wichita Beacon*.

<sup>187</sup> Jean Hays, “Wichita Tooted Aviation’s Horn,” *The Wichita Eagle*, 25 February 1985.

<sup>188</sup> In the club’s 1924 roster, for example, he is listed as chairing the committee on “Rotary Membership Education.” Wichita Rotary Club Membership Roster, 1924, Wichita Club Historical File, RI Archives.

<sup>189</sup> Membership in a Rotary club in this period, however, required attendance at the weekly luncheon meetings. Absenteeism below 60% was usual grounds for removal from the club. Wichita’s club seemed to follow this same rule of thumb. As such, all members of Rotary clubs were at least active in the minimal sense of attending well over half of all weekly luncheons. In the case of Murdock, his chairing of the “Rotary Education Committee” in 1924 and his responsibility for establishing various clubs in nearby cities before and after indicate a level membership well above the average. Wichita Rotary Club Membership Roster, 1924.

for instance, sponsored an air show in 1923 that attracted about 5,000 people while the Wichita Kiwanis club sponsored a competition for a logo in 1928 that best suited Wichita's self-proclaimed title as "The Air Capital."<sup>190</sup>

But the signature event came when over two hundred businessmen managed to raise over \$20,000 to attract the National Air Congress in 1924. Though the massive weekend show awed the audience of well over 25,000 people with classic air show stunts and scores of various military and civilian aircraft, the real purpose lay in the attraction of national attention and investment in Wichita as a national hub for aviation production and distribution.<sup>191</sup> It was in this hotbed of boosterism and municipal development that the Wichita Rotary club hatched a plan to convince the Chicago headquarters to hold its annual international convention in their hometown sometime before 1930. Winning the right to host such a large, international convention attended by thousands of businessmen from around the world would be the ideal way to publicize Wichita's goal of becoming a hub for aircraft production and transportation – the new Detroit for airplanes.

Businessmen like Orville Boyle, Marcellus Murdock, and Harry Stanley (tasked by the club with bringing RI's convention to Wichita in 1924) were already skilled at similar civic projects and promotions. Their involvement in Rotary, however, was the best means of fulfilling their goals and executing their projects. Boosterism, like aviation, was fast becoming a science. In Wichita, it was turning empty prairie lands just outside the city limits into concrete landing strips paved with civic pride and aimed toward a future of public support through private gain.

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<sup>190</sup> Rowe and Miner, *Borne on the South Wind*, 77.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, 73 – 75.

## Flights of Fancy

Like so many other local booster projects, the push to host RI's international convention lasted through the 1920s and constantly played up Wichita's post-WWI identity as a burgeoning center of private aviation.<sup>192</sup> Developed as a way to learn about all other countries in the growing circle of Rotary and to present Wichita as an internationally minded city, the club's "Wichita Plan" was nevertheless rejected by RI in 1925 as a model club activity on international affairs for all other clubs. Yet the Wichitans remained undaunted – so long as the possibility of getting that convention was in sight. Under the club presidencies of William Coleman, founder of Coleman Lamp and Stove Company, in 1926 – 27 and Earle W. Evans, senior law partner and board member for Santa Fe Railroad, Mid-Plains Oil Company, and First National Bank, in 1927 – 28, the club developed a new promotional strategy.

Harry Stanley, the resourceful insurance salesman and founder of Wichita Rotary, was at the center of it all. So was his old friend, "Giff" Booth, Sr., president of Grit Printery and the man responsible for waylaying trainloads of Rotarians *en route* to Houston in 1914. Stanley formed a committee within the club devoted to highlighting RI's "Sixth Object": "The advancement of understanding, good will, and international peace through a world fellowship of business and professional men devoted to the Rotary ideal of service." The committee centered on the publication and distribution of a

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<sup>192</sup> The club was also lobbying to move the international headquarters for RI from Chicago to Wichita for several years. Harry Stanley was also in charge of that project, 1924 – 25 roster's committee chairs lists him as head of "International Headquarters" as well as "International Convention." Other club committees were: Program and Entertainment, Fellowship, Public Affairs, Rotary Membership Education, Rotary Extension Education, Boys' Work, Big Brother, Civic Clubs, Grievances, Inter-City Rotary Relations, Eats and Hotel, Round & Round (club bulletin), Correspondence, Resolutions, Flowers and Calling, Glad Hand, Attendance, and Business Methods.

booklet on the subject that offered up the Wichita Rotarians' own views on the future of international relations.<sup>193</sup> The Wichita club's publication, "The Five Ships and Cargoes," was designed to sell the city of Wichita as a major player in an increasingly interconnected world economy and the local business and professional leaders as men dedicated to peaceful and mutually beneficial ties among nations and national economies. The Wichita club printed up thousands of copies and sent them to every Rotary club in the world and to the leaders of all national governments for good measure.<sup>194</sup> Essentially, the booklet served as Wichita's very own business card to the world.

The booklet revealed in colorful detail and flowery prose just how the Wichita Rotarians – as a club – imagined themselves, their city, and their country in the emerging world of international business and social relations. In short, the book presents the club's

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<sup>193</sup> The sixteen Committee members present a typical slice of the 230 members from the whole club, with the exception of the oil industry, which comprised almost 5% of the club in 1924. Following are their names and their business/professional classifications within the club:

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|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Chair, Harry Stanley,     | Insurance Salesman      | Founder of the Wichita Rotary club       |
| Marcellus "Marsh" Murdock | Morning Newspaper       | The Wichita Eagle                        |
| Billy Ingram, "Billy"     | Chain Lunch Stands      |  |
| Msgr. William Farrell     | Catholic Priest         |  |
| Wash Lilleston            | Law Partner             | Vermillion, Evans, Carey, and Lilleston. |
| Giff Booth, Sr.           | Printing                |  |
| Pierce Atwater            | Wichita Community Chest |  |
| Sylvester Long            | Refrigerating Machines  |  |
| Orville Boyle             | President/Gen. Man.     | The Boyle Co. or, simply, "Potatoes"     |
| "Bob" Timmons             | Investment Securities   | Kansas Gas and Electric                  |
| W. M. G. Howse            | President               | Johnston and Larimer Dry Goods Co.       |
| Bob Zimmerman             | Dental Supplies         |  |
| Charley M. Jackman        | President               | Kansas Milling Co.                       |
| H.W. Cardwell             | unlisted                |  |
| Will Price                | President               | Price Auto Service Co., Auto Retailing   |
| C.Q. Chandler             | not given               |  |

Source: Joyce Sullentrop, *Rotary Club of Wichita (1911 – 1986)*: Club No. 30, 21.

<sup>194</sup> As of June 1928, there were 2,932 clubs in forty-four separate countries, with 301 new clubs in the previous year from thirty different countries. Ecuador, Bolivia, Germany and Paraguay were the newest countries to the fold, while Chile and Mexico each saw the establishment of seventeen new clubs. For club and membership statistics, *Convention Proceedings, Nineteenth Annual Convention*; Minneapolis, Minnesota; 18 – 22 June 1928, 6.

idealized version of themselves and their city and nation's role in the world. It is a remarkable testament to their confidence in the progressive inevitabilities of international trade and the intrinsic benevolence of the United States in the world. As such, the booklet documents an important cultural moment not only in the world of Rotary International, but in the hopes and dreams of Main Street's most active citizens in the interwar years.

The booklet's cover says it all. Five airplanes flying in a V formation among clouds and yet somehow passing over the earth at the same time dominate the cover. With the western hemisphere in full view, the outlines of the Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East are well contoured. Noticeably absent are any political boundaries. Also, only a small dot marks the location of Wichita. For a book designed to put Wichita onto the mental maps of commercial leaders around the world, this is an unexpected subtlety. The image drives home the point: The world is much bigger than the city limits of Wichita, the state of Kansas, and, for that matter, the United States of America. In the foreword, the Wichita Rotarians explain that, in a recent meeting on RI's "Sixth Object" of international peace and cooperation, they had "felt the thrill of fellowship with all the world" and that in "seeking a means of communication and interchange of thought, the idea developed of sending a fleet of ships that we might know each other better."<sup>195</sup> The "ships" are the five airplanes flying in V formation above the earth and they are introduced in order as Craftsmanship, Acquaintanceship, Sportsmanship, Friendship, and Kinship. Each "ship," in turn, gets its own short chapter with a detailed explanation of its components. Taken as a whole, the five ships represent the basic categories of understanding, so to speak, of the Wichita Rotarians' world outlook and their city's

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<sup>195</sup> "The Five Ships and Cargoes," Rotary Club of Wichita, 1928, Foreword (n.p.) Hereafter, "Five Ships."

relation to it. The businessmen of Wichita, “The Air Capital,” had their own original take on RI’s civic internationalism.

Each “ship” appears in its respective chapter first as a close up of an airplane flying over the city of Wichita, with only the thematic names on the planes changed with each chapter. Below each airplane, zooming through billowing clouds, is the newly built Wichita Municipal Airport with the other four airplanes parked in front. Most revealing, however, is the large number of oil derricks off in the distance and the roads with trucks and cars connecting the airport to the oil fields. Moreover, between the airport and the oil wells is a recently harvested field of wheat. The productivity of the land comes in two measures: agriculture and natural resources. Both are in harvest and both are in easy transport to markets far and wide, thanks to the ribbons of new roads and the miracles of flight. The point is simple enough: Wichita is no mere prairie town trapped in the heartland of North America by the continental scales of distance to other markets and nations. Armed with its five “ships,” Wichita had a lot of good – and goods – to offer the world.

The airplane called “Craftmanship” comes first because “labor is foremost in the scheme of life designed for men.” The marketplace provides the foundation of all social relations because “the results of constructive labor constantly widen the scope of contacts with others.” “Contact,” as in trade with others. Consistent with the portrayal of Wichita below each airplane, the chapter argues for the “indispensability of materials” (such as oil, wheat, and airplanes) because it is “recognized that the fate of nations may depend upon the method of distributing the natural and artificial products of the world. True civilization is not only the satisfaction of individual or national ambitions to possess

materials; but equally it is the manner in which possession is accomplished.” The just distribution of “materials” and “products” in the international marketplace lies at the core of “true civilization.” And the guarantor of that just distribution is “honest craftsmanship,” which is “not a legal definition but the proved ability to surpass in quality of product. To oppress or restrict those who have shown this ability is a denial of the common brotherhood and a confession of inferiority. The enforced distress of one race is the dishonor of another.” Adam Smith would be proud. Moreover, fair and open trade and equality of access to all other markets had its corollary in the marketplace of ideas since “the advance of the Human Race is in direct relationship to the improvement of facilities for the exchange and interchange of facts, information, knowledge, truth.”<sup>196</sup>

Reflecting the giddy hopefulness of the business internationalism of the period, Harry Stanley’s committee was hitting as well the keynotes of any given free trade policy from the Open Notes of Secretary Hays at the turn of the last century to the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland at the start of the twenty-first century. Their own twist comes in how they infuse their notions of free trade with such unabashed morality:

The present generation has witnessed the greatest advance of all time in communication and transportation. What significance does this vital truth hold? . . . Shall it be said that this generation used these marvelous forces of nature with their terrific power only to gain selfish advantage in the competitive struggle for existence, or shall we see to it that these forces are employed for the high purpose of bringing the nations into that close relationship where we realize that no part of mankind can sustain injury without the whole suffering thereby.<sup>197</sup>

The global sweep of the Wichita club’s vision matched the imagery of the club’s booklet. It also recapitulated the basic tenets of RI’s civic internationalism in the most progressive

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<sup>196</sup> “The Five Ships,” n.p.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

and all-encompassing terms of modernity. Though within only a few years such an optimistic view of international trade and foreign relations would come to seem a remote dream at best, lost in the competing economic nationalisms of the 1930s, for the Wichita Rotarians in 1928, the scientific wonders of a rapidly shrinking modern world posed a profound moral challenge for an entire generation of humanity, not just any nation. In reaching out to their fellow Rotarians, they believed themselves to be living up to that challenge.

The airplane called “Acquaintanceship” follows suit. Here a different kind of contact is in mind. Unlike the “products of labor,” the second theme covers the intangibles of international exchange by introducing an imaginary man who takes off “on his first trade expedition” and meets up with another from a different land. The moment of “acquaintanceship” arrives: “Encouraged by these first steps and lured on by ever-extending vistas of the world beyond, he makes more and more acquaintances and develops contacts with the men of all races and all nations until the whole world is of him and he of the whole world.” Affiliation and fellowship overcome difference through the establishment of a new “bond of sympathy and mutual interests” such that “even those who differ radically in their ideas and view may, if generous, meet and discuss their differences with pleasure and delight.” The transformative power of face-to-face contact has no limits, so long as those coming together do so in mutual respect and in a reasonable way. The simple “grasp of the hand” becomes something that “links and binds the races of men in the bonds of moral fraternity.”

The sociability of the local Rotary club, in this light, becomes a microcosm of international comity and the constantly multiplying conventions, conferences, and



assemblies held by clubs in various cities and regions around the world the foundation for international peace and prosperity. So the theory goes:

Acquaintanceship will lead him on into the broader fields of life. It will teach him respect for the views, manners, customs, and peculiarities of others. And as it turns him into the paths of fellowship and friendship he will learn the lesson, which the world most needs today, that his enemy is not that hateful being he was so apt to paint him and that ‘the man he hated was the man he did not know.’<sup>198</sup>

The business internationalism of Wichita’s boosters, in fact, was imbued with a great deal of cultural internationalism – if only in rhetoric. The imagined intimacies with distant lands need only the collapsing of distance and the fair exchange of views to overcome hatred and distrust among the nations.

But language is important. And the world they describe in “The Five Ships and Cargoes” committed their club to a level of tolerance for difference – religious, ethnic, cultural, and in some ways racial – that was somewhat surprising. Though the club members could only imagine their counterparts in business as other men, they imagined themselves as part of an unfolding international arena where “many men of many nations getting together on the ground of associated interests – interests athletic, scientific, political, diplomatic, religious, or, as in Rotary, in business and professional – but all starting from items of agreement and common acceptance and *culminating in the elimination of differences.*”<sup>199</sup> [Emphasis added] The club’s paean to modernity and progress centered on the welcoming of an exotic peer not only within the “perfect democracy” of their own international organization but also in the world at large.

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, “Acquaintanceship,” n.p.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

The final three parts of the booklet develop these themes even more as the three remaining airplanes leave the hangar and take off from Wichita's Municipal Airport, laden with the three final cargoes of international peace and understanding: "Sportsmanship," "Friendship," and "Kinship." The first term is shorthand for "a spirit of tolerance" combined with "team-work and cooperation" and serves as a metaphor for the international marketplace as a fair and level field where "a game [can be] played cleanly and manfully." "Friendship," on the other hand, soars much higher in sentiment:

The destiny of a nation is to serve its people in the highest sense by the development of human resources. The world is gradually becoming more civilized and tolerant. In such a development upward national progress is not dependent upon the sword and the bayonet. These are no longer the insignia of power, but in this more civilized world they are becoming the insignia of decay. They represent waste and misery and paralysis of the works of commerce and art which are leading man ever upward.<sup>200</sup>

The progress of civilization entails the rejection of war. Businessmen and professionals who understand this reality of the modern condition, like those of the Wichita Rotary club, are ready to receive their shipment of "Kinship," the cargo for the final airplane to leave the hangar and go aloft. The stakes cannot be higher as "men must finally realize their community of interest and destiny or perish." It is here that the United States of America enters furtively as the modular nation: "In this country we have a cosmopolitan race; we are the world in miniature. Here all peoples of the earth have descendants who share the pride of ancestry that animates the Old World. All strains of blood are as old as man, and all children of the dust are brothers despite themselves." The universal nation has a cosmopolitan pedigree. As a result, the uniquely cooperative nature of Americans

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., "Friendship," n.p.

finds its most sublime expression in the everyday working out of competing interests and races in the pluralism of the marketplace:

We have had to be practical. Races rich in variety must find a common road to peace. In commerce, addicted to bargaining, we are used to finding a common ground of agreement. The conciliatory point of view thus forced upon us has made competition and conflicting interests a source of enlightenment, profit, and friendly association. And why not? Doesn't trade offer more opportunities for friendship than enmity?<sup>201</sup>

What makes the American nation so exemplary is its success at forging a pluralistic harmony out of the cacophony of its free market relations. For a reputable businessman or professional looking to deepen international ties with like-minded peers around the world, this is a national identity that makes sense at home and sounds good abroad – a kind of boosters' mission statement for world peace. The booklet then closed with an open invitation: "Thus together, do we woo the friendship of the world, and lowly listen for the returning wings of these evangels of peace."<sup>202</sup> When Wichita's boosters considered the international, they presented the United States as a great place to do business and as a harbinger of future prosperity for the entire world. For a committee chaired by a man like Harry Stanley, could it have been any other way?

### **Dallas, 1929**

RI's international convention in Dallas in 1929 was simply a must for Umekichi Yoneyama. Dallas was the city where his friend, "Bill" Fukushima, introduced him to Rotary in 1920. He had to be there. Making the long trip on an ocean liner across the Pacific would take a lot of time, however, from Yoneyama's very busy schedule.

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, "Kinship," n.p.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, Conclusion, n.p.

Serving as president of the Mitsui Trust Company had its many obligations. But so did serving as the District Governor for the Seventieth District and its seven clubs in Japan and five in China. The top echelons of RI had their own reasons for wanting Yoneyama to attend that particular convention. For the first time in the organization’s history, more clubs entered into the organization from outside the United States during the prior year than from within RI’s country of origin.<sup>203</sup> Also, with the addition of clubs in Nicaragua and Honduras, “Every republic on the western hemisphere [was] now in the Rotary family.”<sup>204</sup> This was patently untrue, actually, as RI continued to avoid Haiti, Jamaica, and the rest of the West Indies assiduously from the early 1920s to the late 1950s because of racism within the U.S. and Canadian clubs.<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, with many clubs fast

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<sup>203</sup> *Nineteenth International Convention Proceedings; Dallas, Texas; 27 – 31 May 1929*, p.38, 493. The distribution of clubs in 1929 among countries was 100 new clubs in the U.S. and 114 outside the U.S. from July 1, 1928 to July 1, 1929. (The “fiscal year” for RI was always July 1 to June 30 of the following year, when all administrative turnover occurred from the lowest club official to RI’s Board of Directors and international president.) Overall cumulative totals were 2,345 clubs in the U.S. out of approximately 3,146 clubs outside the U.S. (not including another 21 non-U.S. clubs pending approval). In the summer of 1929, in other words, about 25% of all Rotary clubs were outside the U.S., but the proportion was increasing appreciably. There were several specific areas of rapid growth outside the U.S. in the previous year:

| Country        | Clubs as of 1 July 1928 | Clubs as of 30 June 1929 | Net Gain in Clubs* |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Australia      | 18                      | 24                       | 6                  |
| Brazil         | 5                       | 11                       | 6                  |
| Chile          | 26                      | 34                       | 8                  |
| Czechoslovakia | 11                      | 21                       | 10                 |
| Denmark        | 4                       | 7                        | 3                  |
| France         | 17                      | 24                       | 7                  |
| Germany        | 3                       | 7                        | 4                  |
| Great Britain  | 282                     | 310                      | 28                 |
| Holland        | 8                       | 12                       | 4                  |
| Italy          | 15                      | 20                       | 5                  |

Source: *Nineteenth International Convention Proceedings; Dallas, Texas; 27 – 31 May 1929*, 493. \*The year prior, Mexico nearly doubled its number of clubs from 19 to 37 while Chile exploded, going from 4 clubs to 26 in just one year.

<sup>204</sup> *Convention Proceedings*, Dallas, 1929, 49.

<sup>205</sup> See chapter 1, “No Foreigners Allowed,” for more detail.

appearing in Asia and Southeast Asia, from Palestine to India to Thailand to the Malay States and the Dutch East Indies, there was a sense that a crucial tipping point in the organization's worldwide growth was at hand.<sup>206</sup> As a result, the featured plenary session of the entire convention was: "What Rotary Means to Rotary clubs and Rotarians around the world." Yoneyama was the first of many district governors from around the world to speak to the massive audience on the topic.

Having become one of the earliest and most successful exports of Rotary outside the English speaking world, the Tokyo club and its founder, Yoneyama, were of celebrity status by 1929. He and his club were incarnations of what it meant to "extend Rotary" to far off places and cultures, to reach and transform the exotic peers of Rotary's "world fellowship." As such, when the roll call of nations sounded out alphabetically before the entire assembly, the Japanese delegation was passed over for dramatic effect: they were asked to stand up at the end of the roll call to receive their own ovation from the throngs.<sup>207</sup>

On many levels, Yoneyama saw the long trip from Tokyo to Dallas as a personal pilgrimage – and so did his counterparts among the leadership of RI. For over 12,000 attendees and visitors crammed into the Texas State Fair Park over five days in late May, the overall theme was inescapable: "international service." As Yoneyama spoke before thousands on the meaning of "international service" on "the platform of this great parliament of business and professional men of the world," he recounted his first time in Dallas in 1920 and the subsequent establishment of Japan's first Rotary club in Tokyo. He told the audience he had come to a simple conclusion that same year: "Fellow

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<sup>206</sup> Most of this growth was due to the travels and organizing of Rotary clubs by Jim and Lillian Davidson from 1928 to 1931. This is the focus of chapter 5.

<sup>207</sup> *Proceedings*. Dallas, 1929, p. 69.

Rotarians, this is an age of international organization. Many kinds of seed have been transplanted into Japan of late. But some varieties have not entirely agreed with the soil there.... Rotary is one variety that is steadily growing, and is firmly rooted.” Nine clubs with almost 500 members, the vast majority of whom were Japanese, guaranteed they were deep roots

...because Rotary holds the best worked out principle and fittest application of a code as to the practice of a golden rule always wanted by humanity, but particularly needed by the present age after the World War which was fought, we know not why. An organization like ours, with a high moral standard, composed of representative men of business and the professions...must succeed in what all the other practices and theories have failed in doing – bringing satisfaction for the well being of humanity.<sup>208</sup>

Yoneyama’s interpretation of RI’s presence and influence in Japan reflected how Japanese Rotarians tended to approach the teachings of Rotary – in a quasi-mystical way, bordering on a kind of syncretism of Japanese Buddhism and modern, business internationalism. (His translation of the autobiography of RI’s founder, Paul Harris, into Japanese was seen as the personal contribution of a disciple.)<sup>209</sup> More revealing was Rotarian Shun Mizushima’s translation of Japanese characters over an altar at a Buddhist temple in Kyoto for RI’s president, Tom Sutton, during his visit there in 1928: “It would do for a Rotary Motto, as it says ‘If you look upon the world through eyes of kindness and mercy, it will come back to you in oceans of happiness.’”<sup>210</sup> Yoneyama’s words to

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<sup>208</sup> *Convention Proceedings*. Dallas, 1929, 431.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 505. Yoneyama’s translation of Harris’s autobiography, *My Road to Rotary*, led to its translation into Spanish by Guillermo Carvallo, RI’s Special Commissioner for the establishment of new cubs in all of Latin America.

<sup>210</sup> *Proceedings*; Dallas, 1929; 57. For an explanation as to how Japanese religious syncretism prepared the way for cultural adaptations to international business relations, see Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992). But such syncretism was not unique to Yoneyama and the Japanese. In a speech to a plenary session, for example, Rotarian Keats S. Chu of Peking, China, provided his own religious interpretation of

the Dallas audience, therefore, were not mere mimicry of Rotarian jargon. When he turned proudly to the president of the Dallas Rotary club and official host of the entire convention and presented a flag of the Japanese Empire with “the sincerest greeting of the Tokyo Rotary Club,” he did so as a proud, independent, and very high-level Japanese businessman. Yoneyama was direct: “I love my own country; therefore I can sympathize with other people who love their own. I am glad that I am a Rotarian, privileged to join with you in the common interest.” The Dallas Rotarian matched the sentiment, saying that the Japanese flag “typifies the flag of your friendship, which we shall always hold dear.” Thousands stood and roared with applause.<sup>211</sup>

Yoneyama echoed fundamental debates coursing through RI as its international expansion began to take off in the late 1920s. It dominated the Dallas convention as well from beginning to end. In his welcoming address at the opening ceremony at Fair Park Stadium, the mayor of Dallas (along with the governor of Texas) offered the city residents as “your servants” and the city’s swimming pools as “free to you.” Had there been black Rotarians from Haiti and Jamaica at the convention, this would have been an insurmountable problem for the Jim Crow city. An impossible invitation. Whether from Asia, Latin America, or Europe, however, the exotic-peers of Rotary did not threaten the social and economic structures of white supremacy.

Instead, it was a night of international comity and pageantry as the stadium, stuffed with thousands of conventioners, became center stage for the “Procession of

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Rotary: “Two thousand five hundred years ago, Confucius taught the Chinese people the Golden Rule and the doctrine of universal brotherhood and peace.... Rotary, therefore, is not alien to China, but Rotary in its concrete manifestation, in its effective organization, and in its practical application...as carried on by many men of earnestness and zeal all over the world in their respective trades and professions and general conduct of life, is a new revelation to China. Rotary in China is only in its infancy.” *Proceedings*; Dallas, 1929; 437.

<sup>211</sup> *Proceedings*; Dallas, 1929; 430 – 431.

Flags” as hundreds of Dallas high school girls, dressed in the costumes of the 51 nations “composing the great family of Rotary,” escorted into the stadium the flags of each of those nations in the order in which they “were welcomed to their places in the Rotary world.” The procession re-enacted “the progress of each country...toward one goal, that of the ideal of service and friendship as typified by Rotary. When the realization of true worth of such an ideal was reached, each country gave its treasured possession – its flag – to seal the pact.” While the submersion of the national to the international was mostly symbolic, the stagecraft was Olympic in scale: “a mammoth castle of service with Rotary flags waving from its top” and “a veritable Grecian palace from which long staircases led to a beautiful garden wherein lay a huge Rotary wheel on a revolving base.” Amid bright lights, a drum roll, and the blare of trumpets, RI’s two mottoes appeared – “He profits most who serves best” and “service above self” – on each side of the great Rotary wheel so that “the message destined to reach all corners of the earth was visible to all.” The flag of the United States, however, entered last, “followed by the Spirit of the South, known as ‘Dixie.’” The speeches, fireworks, applause, and national airs of each nation played during “this great spectacle of patriotism and international accord” were captured as well by a radio broadcast by KRLD for thousands more in their homes.<sup>212</sup>

The “procession of the flags” played out the imperial trappings of an American business empire in the sights and sounds of international peace and progress. The theatrical blurring of nationalist and internationalist themes came together in a pastiche of business class triumphalism. There were no spatial limits to Rotary’s growth but “the far corners

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<sup>212</sup> *Proceedings*. Dallas, 1929, pp. 41 – 46.



of the earth.” Like the United States itself, RI’s expansion was only a question of time, its benevolent assimilation self-evident.

But there was genuine concern among both U.S. and non-U.S. Rotarians that RI’s “international service” was really just so much Americanization. During the smaller “international service assemblies” at the Dallas convention, club members and conventioners at times showed greater sophistication than the stage managers of the “procession of flags.” Rotarian Joe Porter of Lexington, Kentucky, was one of the most articulate:

If we want to take them simply the ideals of Rotary and let them adapt these ideals to their particular needs, we are going to accomplish a great deal more than if we try to take the ideals and put upon them the western interpretation.... I happen to be connected with the missionary society that is having some discussion along this line. When we attempt to impose upon those people the interpretations of a western civilization of certain ideals..., we are getting into a pitfall. ...If we will take to them the ideals of service and let them take those ideals and work them out in terms of their own civilization, Rotary is going to have a much more successful career in its extension work than otherwise.<sup>213</sup>

Toledo’s Frank Mulholland, “Past President” of the I.A.R.C. in 1914 – 15, was more concise: “We Rotarians of the United States must learn that we cannot Americanize the world through Rotary. Neither can we Anglo-Saxonize American Rotary throughout the world. It is international.”<sup>214</sup> Another gathered assembly on the same topic heard from delegates from Pittsburgh and Washington, DC who had the consuls and ambassadors of various nations to their weekly meetings as guest speakers and then considered what clubs in cities without such dignitaries might do for “international service activities.” A Rotarian from New Orleans suggested having members of the club speak on other

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 343.

countries: “I think I know the psychology of the eastern countries, such as India, Persia, Egypt, and Palestine. I could speak to the club on that subject because I am familiar with it.... I was born in America but I have been in Persia and southern Russia, too.”

A modern business traveler’s view of the world would suffice in many clubs as a voice of authority on “other races and nations” and “international differences”: some familiarity with another country was better than none. But a Rotarian from Peoria, Illinois cautioned against being content with seeing the world from a hotel window and offered an alternative source of expertise on things international:

I conducted a study class (nearly all the churches today have study classes) ...on a book that related to the South American republics.... The books that are written today for the church are written intelligently and attractively, and you will find them of great interest. I suggest that in the small towns, especially, they turn to some of these books that you find the women of our churches reading. The women probably know more about these countries than the men do today.<sup>215</sup>

As with the “procession of flags,” women of all ages were often used in display mode for “international service” activities, but rarely in the capacity of experts on the subject, as suggested by the man from Peoria.<sup>216</sup> Tensions between older forms of missionary internationalism and newer, secular forms of business internationalism were evident in such exchanges as RI continued trying to hold together a civil religion premised on old-time religious injunctions as well as modern, professional business practices. Tensions over gender roles and the authority of experts were also manifest as the claims of white, established businessmen to social trusteeship of the community were growing more dependent on their internationalist credentials. Appearing ignorant of the world outside

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 315 – 317.

<sup>216</sup> A significant exception to this practice was the active involvement of Lillian Dow Davidson in chronicling the activities of her husband in her long series of articles in *The Rotarian*. See chapter 5.

the U.S. risked the loss of face locally – especially when standing next to their wives, sisters, and daughters.

Some small towns were already finding ways to demonstrate their connections with peoples abroad – at least in theory. The central question posed by RI’s International Service Committee to all twelve separate assemblies held on the meaning of “international service” was a mouthful: “By what kind of international service programs can a Rotary club promote knowledge; first, of other races and nations; second, of economic and racial problems that may cause international strife; and third, of arbitration and other plans for adjusting international differences?”<sup>217</sup> A big question for a small town Rotary club. But some responses were revealing. A Rotarian from tiny Uvalde, Texas, population 6,000, explained that, when Mexican Rotarians complained that “we wouldn’t let Mexicans eat in our town. We had International Service right there.” The Texan explained further that, in conjunction with 45 other clubs in their district in Texas,

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<sup>217</sup> *Proceedings*; Dallas, 1929; 383. The International Service Committee was responsible for updating RI publications on the topic and overseeing the nature and scope of club activities of the same. As more non-U.S. and non-Anglo clubs entered the fraternity, RI’s Board of Directors and administrative committees were expected to reflect the changes. The following table illustrates the make up of the highest echelons of RI’s administration by the late 1920s:

| <b>Officers of RI</b> | <b>1928 – 1929</b>       |                                |                         |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Name                  | Classification           | Title                          | Residence               |
| I.B. “Tom” Sutton     | Hardware – retailing     | President                      | Tampico, Mexico         |
| Thomas Stephenson     | Medical Journal          | 1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President | Edinburgh, Scotland     |
| Almon Roth            | Educating – Universities | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President | Palo Alto, California   |
| Eduardo Moore         | Physician – Surgeon      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice President | Santiago, Chile         |
| William C. Achard     | Dentistry                | Director                       | Zurich, Switzerland     |
| William H. Campbell   | Women’s apparel – retail | Director                       | Rochester, New York     |
| John E. Carlson       | General Law Practice     | Director                       | Kansas City, Kansas     |
| Joseph A. Caulder     | Creamery                 | Director                       | Regina, Canada          |
| R. L. Hill            | Alumni associations      | Director                       | Columbia, Missouri      |
| S. Wade Marr          | Investment Banking       | Director                       | Raleigh, North Carolina |
| Arthur H. Sapp        | General Law Practice     | Director                       | Huntington, Indiana     |
| Josef Schulz          | Agric. Implements Mfg.   | Director                       | Prague, Czechoslovakia  |

they decided to “get well-informed on the districts of the world. So they named my little town Finland.... In getting information concerning Finland I found that the presiding officer of the League of Nations was from there, that Finland took second honors in the Olympic games, etc.”<sup>218</sup> In Mission, Texas, each of the town’s 40 + Rotarians were given a card with the name of the first president of the first Rotary club in a given country and then asked to imagine themselves as those men and to speak on the details of the club’s founding as provided on the back of the cards. The “great international conference” of Mission, Texas was, in effect, a modified, small-town version of the Wichita Plan.<sup>219</sup>

Meanwhile, another Rotarian from Rexburg, Idaho, said the “procession of flags” had given him an idea:

place a small flag of all the countries with a Rotary club before the club members during an “international service program” and have that member get up and announce the flag, tell when that nation came into Rotary, and try to find out something about the meaning of that flag.... For instance, take the Austrian flag. It is red, white and red. That flag has a meaning the same as our flag.<sup>220</sup>

The Idahoan’s assertion that its “meaning [was] the same as our flag” bordered on a kind of small-town cosmopolitanism voiced by another Rotarian from South Hill, Virginia:

“Don’t judge the citizen of another country, take for instance China, by the boy or the man in the laundry, or in some other phase of commercial activity in your town. Don’t

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 385 – 86. The Rotarian, Arthur Mayhew (lumber retailing), later became a member of RI’s Board of Directors in 1933 – 34, alongside Fong Sec, Chinese diplomat from Shanghai; Clinton P. Anderson, later to become U.S. congressman and long-time Senator from New Mexico as well as Secretary of Agriculture under President Truman; and other successful businessmen from Canada, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Just as RI was trying to incorporate more and more leadership from outside the U.S. to deflect criticism of its being too centered on U.S. interests, so it was also seeking to include as much as possible representatives from the smallest towns and cities within its fold like Uvalde, Texas.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 389.

judge the nation by the individual, and be lenient in your understanding of what these people have to say.”<sup>221</sup> While more substantial programs of student exchange, visitations, and correspondence developed in larger cities and towns with greater resources and breadth of contact, we find that, even in the smallest and most marginal of clubs, tolerance of “international differences” and engagement with an imaginary world of exotic-peers had its cachet – and Rotary’s capacity to tap into and cultivate it.

Finally, what was the value of RI’s internationalist ambitions without the content of its civic activities – that which Rotary was imparting unto the world? Only a half hour before Yoneyama led off the crucial plenary session on “The International Service Program” was another key plenary on “Community Service.” After talks on Student Loan Funds, Rural-Urban Acquaintance, and Boys’ Work, the final speaker stood up to detail how his home club of Toledo, Ohio had brought about the creation of the Ohio Society for Crippled Children and the International Society for Crippled Children. The accomplishments of Ed Kelsey and his fellow Toledo Rotarians over the prior eight years were significant:

May I say to you that we have thirty states and provinces of Canada that are today holding out the opportunity of life for these crippled children, these five hundred thousand children in this country alone who never had a thing done for them until Rotary pointed the way, and today the Elks, the Shriners, The American Legion, have all fallen in and now we are working on the finest thing in our program....<sup>222</sup>

The Toledo club’s project stemmed from the realization that no other organization in their city was even aware of the children’s presence and numbers, let alone doing anything to rectify it. Filling in such a gap in community service and bringing in other

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>222</sup> *Proceedings*; Dallas, 1929; 412 – 415.

organizations to help solve the problem was considered the ideal way for a Rotary club to operate. It was American voluntarism at its best: efficient, philanthropic, cooperative, and private. And there was nothing like sentiment to motivate the volunteers:

Can you imagine what comes into a child's face the first time he throws away his crutches and is able to walk, stand erect and hold his own before men?... I have seen tears come unashamed down the cheeks of every man because they have looked into the faces of these crippled children and known they have had a part in the making of a man.

Sentiment aside, the story of the Toledo Rotary club's first forays into coping with the ravages of polio in children in the 1920s soon became a common community service activity for Rotary clubs through the 1930s and 1940s and eventually blossomed into one of the most significant public health initiatives of the postwar era as the Rotary Foundation, which began significant growth only after World War II, partnered with the UN's World Health Organization in 1985 with the common goal of eradicating polio through oral inoculations by 2005 – Rotary International's centennial. Except for a few outbreaks in a small number of countries, the goal has been nearly met.<sup>223</sup> In all its aspects, the civic internationalism of RI was nearing its phase of maturation just as the storm clouds of the Great Depression, economic nationalisms, European and Asian fascisms, and domestic political isolationism were gathering on the horizon.

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<sup>223</sup> For a summary of RI's work with the World Health Organization and the drive to eradicate polio, see David C. Forward, *A Century of Service: The Story of Rotary International* (Evanston, Ill.: Rotary International), 229 – 247; for a detailed history of the postwar activities of the Rotary Foundation and its partnership with the W.H.O., see Sarah Gibbard Cook, "For All the World's Children: Rotary and the Vision of a Polio Free World," 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment, unpublished manuscript, 2000, 288 – 390, RI Archives; and for the history of the disease and the story of its near eradication over the twentieth-century, see David Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

## **From “The Air Capital of the World” to Boeing Plant #2**

For the Wichita Rotarians, the Dallas convention was not so much a personal pilgrimage as a sales opportunity. Not only was the distance between Wichita and Dallas nothing like what Yoneyama had to traverse, the Wichitans were able to travel much faster than Yoneyama on his Pacific steamship. As yet another publicity stunt, the Wichita Rotarians flew to the convention as one large fleet of private aircraft. Naturally, Harry Stanley was behind the stunt. His committee’s booklet, “The Five Ships,” had made such a splash in the world of RI the year before that everyone had expected him and his fellow Wichitans to arrive in Minneapolis, the convention city for 1928, in airplanes. In preparing for the next convention in early 1929, Harry Stanley, Merle Bennett, General Manager of the J.O. Adams Music Co., and Earl Hutton, of A.M. Hutton & Son, casualty insurance, hatched a plan to exceed all expectations. About twenty-five Rotarians and their spouses formed the “Wichita Armada” of five Travel Air monoplanes, a Phillips Petroleum plane, three Stearman biplanes, and another six aircraft all “designed, built, tested, and flown by and from the air-minded city” and flew to Love Field in Dallas on a “mission of peace and prosperity.” Even though the original plan involved convincing Charles Lindbergh and Walter Beech to lead the “flying squadron” of some thirty planes, the “Wichita Armada” of half that size and no celebrities still drew a large crowd and made headlines and the newsreels. In preparation for the stunt, the Wichita club held one of their weekly meetings at the Travel Air factory, where half of the 300 Rotarians and their spouses got to fly in one of Travel Air’s “big cabin” planes.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Sullentrop, *Rotary Club of Wichita, Kansas*, 21 – 22.

But Harry Stanley's promotion did not stop there. During the massive opening dinner of the convention, paper airplanes shot across the tables while the Wichita Rotarians handed out tickets for free airplane rides. In the end, the Wichita Rotarians pitched their city as the "Air Capital of the World" to an estimated 500 or so conventioners as they rode the bus to and from the airport for their free rides. The entire affair was considered a major promotional success for Wichita, searing the city's image as "wide-awake, up-to-date, and air-conscious" into everyone's mind at the convention.<sup>225</sup>

It was also in the minds of investors on Wall Street. Of the four most important aircraft manufacturers in Wichita in the 1920s (Swallow, Travel Air, Stearman, and Cessna), only Cessna made it out of the decade still a locally owned and independent corporation. In the case of Stearman, what started as a \$60,000 investment by Marcellus Murdock and other local investors in 1920 became a part of the United Aircraft and Transport Corporation only three months after the "Wichita Armada" made its trek to Love Field. Put together thanks to City Bank of New York, the new conglomerate had \$80 million in capitalization and \$250 million in total assets, including Stearman of Wichita, Boeing of Seattle, and several other aircraft manufacturers. Though Stearman was debt-free and turning a modest \$65,000 in annual profit in 1929, it was too small to compete on its own and too big to avoid the attention of investors at the national level. The newly formed United Air Lines began investing money into its experimental works in Burbank, run by John K. Northrop. Wichita got some investment as well, resulting in the construction of a new \$400,000 factory that later became known as Boeing Plant #1.

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.



The wide-open space around the new plant would become a major selling point for greatly expanding Stearman's production capacities a decade later to accommodate mass production of B-29 bombers designed to fly thousands of miles across the Pacific. That second plant would become known simply as Plant #2 and Stearman as Boeing – Wichita, with Rotarian J. Earl Schaefer managing its production and labor.<sup>226</sup>

Wichita was fortunate, in fact, that Schaefer was in charge during the worst years of the Depression. With Cessna and Travel Air shutting down operations in 1931 and 1932 respectively and the First National Bank – a local bank with Rotarian Earle Evans on its board – calling in its loan on Stearman, Schaefer made his own trek to the headquarters of United Air Lines to try and save Stearman's operations in Wichita. He succeeded in two ways: he negotiated a loan through the Fourth National Bank and he won Stearman its first military contracts. By 1933, Stearman managed to design and build the Kaydet biplane. Using outdated technology, the desperate aircraft company nevertheless had come up with a workhorse airplane that was perfect for training new pilots because of its no-nonsense design and ability to take a beating from newcomers to flight. The airplane became the salvation of Stearman as it went through repeated versions through the 1930s until the last days of the war in 1945. The success of the Kaydet translated into Stearman's – and later Boeing-Wichita's – specialization on the production and delivery of military aircraft while Boeing – Seattle focused on the production of commercial, passenger airliners. An estimated 60,000 cadets learned to fly for the Army Air Corps in the cockpit of a Kaydet by the end of World War II.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Rowe and Miner, *Borne on the South Wind*, 95 –96.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

Rotarian Schaefer's company may not have been at the forefront of aviation technology throughout the 1930s, but it was at the forefront of political and economic developments and in a solid position by 1940 to receive one of the largest and most daunting orders for military aircraft in the history of aerial warfare. Boeing's Plant #2 had exceeded the demanding production schedules for the B-29 first set out in 1943. By early 1945, Plant #2 had reached its peak production, producing four bombers per day and serving as the model for B-29 production in Georgia, Nebraska, and Washington. By war's end, Wichita alone had built 44 percent of the entire fleet of 3,895 B-29 bombers.<sup>228</sup> From the first raids on Japan's steel center in Yawata in June 1944 to the firebombing of Tokyo in March 1945 to the annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki later that summer, the impact of the B-29 bomber on the nature and outcome of the war in the Pacific would be hard to overestimate. For the city of Wichita, the U.S. Army Air Corps, and the Boeing corporation, it was a profitable venture all around.

But the price for Wichita's full incorporation into the postwar U.S. political and economic system was its loss of independence and reliance on the U.S. military budget. In fact, success in B-29 bomber production at Boeing – Wichita under Schaefer during World War II led to further important contracts for production of the B-47 and B-52 after the war and well into the cold war era and to the location and development of McConnell Air Force Base – a crucial base for long distance operations for the U.S. Air Force to this day.<sup>229</sup> But becoming a key player in a permanent war economy was far from the minds of the adoring crowds at Love Field when the "Wichita Armada" was touching down in Dallas, 1929. For the Wichita Rotarians, the term "armada" was part of a promotional

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<sup>228</sup> Jacob Vander Meulen, *Building the B-29* (Washington and London, 1995).

<sup>229</sup> Rowe and Miner, 97 – 98, 105 – 106.

stunt, a metaphor for private sector, industrial ambitions. By 1945, the term was anything but a metaphor – particularly for Japanese citizens in urban centers.

## **Conclusion**

Though social networking among businessmen brought it together, the Wichita Rotary club represented something more than bridging and bonding among the city's economic leaders. The club's constant boosterism on the city's' behalf contributed greatly to the rise of the aviation industry long before the advent of World War II. In short, the city of Wichita – “The Air Capital of the World” – knew its airplanes. When the Wichita club sent out its booklet, “The Five Ships and Cargoes,” to all the Rotary clubs and national leaders of the world in 1928, they were sending out their own take on RI's civic internationalism. Their belief in the power of aviation technology to annihilate distances and therefore differences between nations and peoples paralleled their faith in RI as international institution capable of bringing the business classes of the world together in harmony.

But the airplane could annihilate cities as well as distance.

Because of the city's long commitment to developing aviation as its core industry, the War Department decided to invest over \$60 million in Wichita by the summer of 1940. The decision, however, was more complex and revealing. First, war planners in 1940 saw the location of key production centers in the interior of North America as a strategic benefit. Unlike the coasts, the heartland was safe from attacks from abroad. Second, locating defense production in a region that had never escaped the clutches of the Great Depression meant regionally targeted economic growth outside the urban centers of

the northeast and mid-west. The construction of Boeing's gargantuan Plant #2 with massive contracts from the Army Air Corps for delivery of thousands of B-29 bombers marked one of the first significant steps toward the postwar fiscal policy of military Keynesianism. Third, an abundance of native-born farm workers familiar with machinery and an industrial base already built on private aviation and open shop traditions meant a cheap labor pool ready to transition to the mass production of warplanes with limited labor strife and minimal security concerns.<sup>230</sup> Fourth, Wichita's Chamber of Commerce lobbied Congress and the War Department to boost Wichita as the ideal investment spot while the city council approved funding for a new runway and infrastructure at the city's municipal airport.<sup>231</sup> The streamlined civic machinery put in place a generation earlier by Wichita Rotarians was paying off handsomely in its lobbying at the U.S. War Department. Like many of his fellow Wichitans, Rotarian Schaefer, the president of Boeing-Stearman, relished federal and local investments and the coming economic boom.

But Wichita's alliance with the U.S. military after 1940 had its consequences in Japan as well. When General Curtis LeMay took over the XXI Bomber Command and began to change the B-29 missions over Japan from high altitude, inaccurate bombing to low altitude, incendiary bombing, the tactical change proved devastating for both Japanese citizens and their industrial base. The first of many ghastly applications of this

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<sup>230</sup> W. C. Coleman, President of The Coleman Company, Mayor of Wichita, and active member of the Wichita Rotary club for many years, was considered such a model employer, he was featured in RI's monthly magazine: "an employer without a labor problem tells the story of how a successful business policy was evolved." Charles St. John, "Chief Factors in the Labor Problem," *The Rotarian*, March 1923, 128. The Coleman Company also gained many military contracts during the war.

<sup>231</sup> Vander Meulen, Jacob, *Building the B-29* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995, 36 – 55.

new bombing strategy occurred on March 9 and 10, 1945 over Tokyo, resulting in at least 78,000 deaths that night alone.<sup>232</sup> Like so many other newspapers in the U.S., *The Wichita Eagle* ran the story from the Associated Press the following day, describing how “a sea of flame” fifteen square miles in area could be seen forty miles away. General LeMay explained that “Hundreds of small business establishments directly concerned with the war industry...in the area were now wiped out.”<sup>233</sup>

LeMay’s euphemisms of war aside, it fell upon the longtime editor-in-chief of *The Wichita Eagle*, Victor Murdock, younger brother to Wichita Rotary’s Marcellus Murdock, to interpret the meaning of Tokyo’s firebombings for the readers of the Wichita daily. Murdock emphasized the fundamental change in the meaning of Wichita’s geography. Global warfare meant that the “crops to be gathered in the Southwest this year” and the “oil resources of the prairies” could all be “as easily dispatched from Wichita east to Russia and France as west to the Philippines and Burma” – thanks to the “most modern of arms, the airplanes.”<sup>234</sup>

For Murdock, the lesson of the firebombings was the geographical re-conception of Wichita from a prairie town in the American heartland to a key point from which the U.S. could project its industrial, political, and military will east toward Europe and west toward the Pacific simultaneously. “Thus despite the liability a location in the deep interior may have been for Wichita and cities like it in the past, it is today and will be

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<sup>232</sup> On the importance of this transition to the United States, see Michael Sherry, *The Rise of American Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987). See also, Kenneth P. Werrell, *Blankets of Fire: U.S. Bombers Over Japan during World War II* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

<sup>233</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, March 10, 1945

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 March 1945

tomorrow an asset.”<sup>235</sup> Geographically, America’s heartland now played a central part in the nation’s emerging global role. The people of Wichita, Murdock argued, should embrace this new reality. Militarily and politically speaking, the Far East was now the Near West.

Victor Murdock’s interpretation of General LeMay’s firebombing of Tokyo as a moment of civic pride, though heartless, was not unfounded: “Wichita is indeed proud to have so important a part in one of the more impressive phases of the conflict to put down tyranny and make men free again. This community can feel that it is doing as much as any city, and more than most, in the urgent task of shortening the war and removing the menace to the lives of our youth.”<sup>236</sup> Through its contributions to military aviation in general and to the production of the B-29 bomber in particular, the city of Wichita was maturing as an industrial center of national and international import just as the Wichita Rotarians had imagined in their “Five Ships” almost two decades earlier.<sup>237</sup> Wichita experienced almost a ninefold increase in the number of new factory workers from 1939 to 1944, leading the way among new “defense cities” during that period.<sup>238</sup> The scale and means by which Wichita was fulfilling its long-held industrial ambitions, however, were inconceivable for the Wichita Rotarians in 1928. The city was not only a happy witness to the marriage of war and economic growth. It was a postwar child of that marriage.

The daily political cartoon opposite Murdock’s editorial drove home what everyone in Wichita already understood: war meant lots of business. In the cartoon, a diminutive female angel called “Peace” stands before a massive, bearded Roman soldier

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Victor Murdock, editorial, *The Wichita Eagle*, 12 March 1945.

<sup>237</sup> Coleman as early member of Wichita RC, as club pres in 1920s, and son actively involved also during the period and also club pres.

<sup>238</sup> Vander Meulen, *Building the B-29 Bomber*, 38 – 41.

named “War.” Though both are holding a magician’s hat, the brawny soldier also holds up a rabbit by the ears bearing the sign “Full Employment.” Through a menacing grin, the soldier exclaims, “See! Perfectly simple!” while the angel stares in surprise at his empty hat, saying “It looks easy when you do it.” Titled “It’s a good trick if you can do it,” the cartoon reflected the social and economic experience of Wichita and many other “defense cities” during World War II.<sup>239</sup>

But the real trick was Wichita’s embrace of its new role in projecting U.S. military and political power the world over. So long as the gruesome destruction of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the distant cities of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe and many others in the coming weeks and months remained an acceptable price to pay for bringing a rapid end to the war, the citizens of Wichita were free to go about their business with full confidence in their nation’s continuing republican heritage. Murdock’s conclusion was most telling: “The B-29’s are winged harbingers of the closing in of conquering hosts.”<sup>240</sup> The contradictions of Wichita’s new status in the world did not seem to matter to Murdock. Business was booming in the heartland and victory was imminent abroad.

The wartime transformation of Wichita outpaced the ideals of RI’s civic internationalism. The faith shared by Rotarians Harris, Yoneyama, and the Wichita Rotarians in “cultivating the spirit of friendship and understanding in its members,...and then sending them out to spread that spirit among other people” held no ground before the emergence of total warfare and the advent of U.S. global hegemony. Cultural diplomacy among private citizens from many nations, like private philanthropic efforts

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<sup>239</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, 12 March 1945.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

by voluntary associations, had to work out new institutional roles in a postwar world dominated by professional diplomats working through state agencies and economic systems centered on state regulation and funding.



### **Chapter 3: “The Rotary Spirit Lives and Shines Through Earthquake and Fire”: Tokyo Meets Main Street**

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Modern statesmanship has come to realize that conquest is crude – that war does not pay. A friendly country is a much better market than a conquered country; tariffs are less costly than the burden of debt and the incubus of armaments.

Baron Shidehara, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in address to the Tokyo Rotary club on the occasion of RI’s twentieth anniversary, 25 February 1925.<sup>241</sup>

We felt as if we were in a Rotary club in America!

Fred I. Packard, Classification “Oil,” of Fargo, North Dakota, on his visit with the Tokyo Rotary Club, 24 April 1929.<sup>242</sup>

Subhuman, inhuman, lesser human, superhuman – all that was lacking in the perception of the Japanese enemy was a human like oneself.

John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy*.<sup>243</sup>

#### **Introduction**

In 1919, the Japanese government sent Umekichi Yoneyama, then Director of the Mitsui Trust Bank, on a “financial mission” with the Baron Megata to the United States. On his return trip, Yoneyama spent New Years day 1920 in Dallas, Texas, where he met and stayed with Kisoji Fukushima, Assistant Manager of the Mitsui Bussan Kaisha. Fukushima, who was living and working in Dallas as a wool exporter to Japan, used the opportunity to tell Yoneyama of his experience as a member of the Dallas Rotary Club.

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<sup>241</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club* (Tokyo Rotary Club: Tokyo, 1940), Part I, 104.

<sup>242</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part II, 389 – 392. (Packard led the 124 Tokyo Rotarians and dozen or so Rotarian visitors in club singing for that day.)

<sup>243</sup> John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 9.

Known simply as “Bill” rather than “Kisoji” by his fellow Dallas Rotarians, Fukushima and his club made quite an impression on the commercial banker, as “he thought the principles of Rotary exactly coincided with his philosophy.” Yoneyama returned to Tokyo and immediately set about organizing Tokyo’s very own club. After months of discouraging results, Rotary’s headquarters in Chicago appointed Walter L. Johnstone, agent for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company in Yokohama, to assist Yoneyama in creating one of the first Rotary clubs in East Asia.

Johnstone was a good choice. Already instrumental in establishing the Shanghai Rotary club in 1919, Johnstone knew how to form a Rotary club in such environs.<sup>244</sup> With Johnstone’s guidance, Yoneyama invited “several of his intimate friends to a dinner at the Bankers’ Club,” where he finally met with success. “Every one present was thoroughly convinced of the noble purpose of the Rotary club, as expounded by Mr. Yoneyama.”<sup>245</sup> By November 1920, Yoneyama’s Rotary club had seventeen charter members, all of whom were partners, presidents, managing directors, and/or owners of corporations in all variety of Japanese industry and business.<sup>246</sup> In short, Yoneyama’s

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<sup>244</sup> *Japan* (Tokyo: Tokyo Rotary Club, 1927), 115. Roger Pinneo, former president of the Seattle Rotary Club, established the Rotary Club of Manila the same year and in much the same way as Johnstone. By no coincidence, both Pinneo and Johnstone worked for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Jno I Hoffman, Assistant to the Secretary of the International Association of Rotary Clubs, to John Barrett, Chairman, Foreign Extension Committee, Wash DC, 21 July 1919, Shanghai Club Historical File, Vol. 1, RI Archives. Roger Pinneo, who became port manager for Seattle upon his return to the U.S. from his time in East Asia, established the Shanghai club with much help from Dr. Julian Petit, a medical missionary and longtime resident of Shanghai. The International Association of Rotary Clubs had formally delegated Pinneo to act on its behalf. See George Treadwell, original secretary for the Shanghai Rotary club, to Carlo Bos, president of the Shanghai club; 27 November 1935; File “Other Clubs – Shanghai,” Chicago One Archives; and W.G. M. Buckisch, Commissioner of Private Education, “The History of the Manila Rotary Club,” 31 January 1929; File, “Manila Rotary Club;” Chicago One Archives.

<sup>245</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club* (Tokyo Rotary Club: Tokyo, 1940), Part I, 1.

<sup>246</sup> See Appendix A with list of members from 1921 to 1923. The final edition of *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club, Part V*, provides a complete list of membership from 1920 to 1940, with exact tenure of each member’s time in the club.

friends were highest echelons of Tokyo industrialists, bankers, retailers, and media – except “Bill” Fukushima, recently returned from Dallas, who was still a mere “Assistant Manager” in wool importing from Texas. With some help from Dallas and Chicago and from Fukushima and Johnstone, Yoneyama had managed to bring back to Tokyo a very unusual souvenir from his “financial mission” to the United States. How could two cities from America’s heartland and a handful of private businessmen contribute so much to the establishment of an outpost of American business culture in Tokyo in 1920? What attracted so many top Japanese businessmen to join so quickly?

The nature of Rotary’s institutional transference to Tokyo emerged from networks of global trade and transportation. At the Tokyo club’s sixth meeting in June 1921, Zenjuro Horikoshi, Senior Partner of Horikoshi & Co., described his most recent business trip to the United States in some detail. As a silk exporter with branch offices in New York, London, Paris, and Sydney, Horikoshi had crossed the Pacific Ocean a remarkable fifty-two times. He was the all-star of globetrotters. This particular journey, he explained to his fellow Rotarians in Tokyo, was quite different for him:

I have been to the United States many times, but this was the first trip I made as a member of a Rotary Club. I was treated very kindly by fellow Rotarians everywhere. When I arrived at Chicago, for example, they met me at the station with an automobile and took me to a Hotel. They did everything I wanted, in fact, they treated me as though I was their long-time friend. I attended the New York Club meeting several times. There were present at every meeting something like 500 members, consisting of various trades and professions . . . . The members are very friendly to each other and *perfect democracy* exists among them.<sup>247</sup> [italics added]

Horikoshi’s experience is instructive. The friendship, hospitality, and deference shown to him in Chicago and New York City contrasted sharply with the nativism that drove the

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<sup>247</sup> *The History of Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part I, 8.

Emergency Quota Act through the U.S. Congress only a month earlier and the National Origins Act three years later, which formally blocked all Japanese immigration to the United States. The growing anti-Japanese racism behind the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 and California's Alien Land Law of 1913 was baring its teeth by the time of Horikoshi's triumphant welcome into the inner-sanctum of the Chicago and New York Rotary clubs. But Horikoshi was hardly moving in a social world of isolationists, nativists, and provincials. His rosy description of those city's Rotary clubs as a "perfect democracy" of trades, professions, and businesses was not entirely fanciful, just limited to his own experience with one type of Rotary club in one type of American city – large, industrial, and international. While more elite clubs existed in cities like Chicago and New York City, those cities' Rotary clubs were willing to accept Horikoshi as a full member from afar rather than as a dignified guest for the day. For someone like Horikoshi and his fellow Rotarians in Tokyo, this was a business opportunity that paralleled new diplomatic openings between the United States and Japan in the immediate wake of World War I.<sup>248</sup>

What Horikoshi meant by "perfect democracy" is a key concept to this chapter. The world of international business and its currency of transnational class identity made possible the transplanting of a Rotary club from the cotton belt of America to the imperial capital of Japan. Yoneyama's belief that the "principles of Rotary so coincided" with his own Japanese philosophy drove him to become the godfather of over forty Japanese Rotary clubs by 1940. Meanwhile, the royal treatment of Japanese businessman like

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<sup>248</sup> For analysis of the transitional period and the diplomatic promise it seemed to hold for both nations, see Sadao Asada, "Between the Old Diplomacy and the New, 1918 – 1922: The Washington System and the Origins of Japanese-American Rapprochement," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April 2006), 211 – 230.

Horikoshi while visiting the U.S. in a period of heightened nativism and isolationism expressed two countervailing trends in U.S. culture during the interwar years. This chapter demonstrates that the experiences of Horikoshi in Chicago and New York and the activities of Yoneyama, Fukushima, and Johnstone in Dallas and Tokyo were not historical anomalies, blips on the screen of American isolationism after the rejection of the League of Nations and the adoption of landmark anti-immigrant legislation. Rather, the activities of these men and their organization were a sign of things to come. Not only did Rotary clubs thrive in East Asia and the Pacific Basin long before the outbreak of war between China and Japan in 1937, they were also cropping up in smaller and smaller cities and towns within the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and many European and Latin American countries as well. RI's civic internationalism found expression in a variety of national and local settings.

But the particular success of Rotary clubs in Japan during the interwar period presents a special case. The activities, goals, and evolution of the Tokyo Rotary club in response to massive change during the Taishô Democracy and early Showa period reveal some important divergences as well as continuities in U.S.-Japanese relations before and after World War II.<sup>249</sup> In a sense, this chapter helps explain how postwar Japanese industry and civil society could adapt so well to the postwar U.S. military occupation of Japan (1945 to 1952) and U.S. hegemony in the Pacific in general. The transition seemed

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<sup>249</sup> The historiography on US-Japanese relations is extensive. For a general view of U.S.-Japanese relations, see W.G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995); Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000); John W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace* (New York: New Press, 1993); Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House, 1999); and Ramon Myers, Mark R. Peattie, Ching-chi Chen, *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895 – 1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

relatively smooth because it was well on its way long before the formal surrender of Japan on the U.S.S. Missouri.<sup>250</sup>

Like the cultural influence of American baseball, the diplomatic contacts of the Institute of Pacific Relations, the cosmopolitan exchange through the U.S.-Japan Societies, and the presence of organizations like the YMCA and the Boy Scouts, RI's expansion into Japan during the interwar years fit within a greater pattern of international engagement. Within this context, Rotary made its own contributions. As a well-funded non-profit, RI had a specific institutional focus driving its presence and growth – unlike baseball.<sup>251</sup> As a non-state actor, RI was not formally beholden to state sponsorship or any particular corporate foundations – unlike the Japan Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations.<sup>252</sup> As an international service club, RI was not limited to U.S.-Japanese

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<sup>250</sup> For a complete analysis of postwar U.S.-Japanese relations and the central role of private and philanthropic institutions in making the transition possible, see Tadashi Yamamoto, Akira Iriye, and Makoto Iokibe, eds., *Philanthropy and Reconciliation: Rebuilding Postwar U.S.-Japan Relations* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2006), especially, with respect to this chapter of the dissertation, Kimura Masato, "U.S.-Japan Business Networks and Prewar Philanthropy: Implications for Postwar U.S.-Japan Relations," Chapter 9, 279 – 312, in *idem*.

<sup>251</sup> See Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, "For the Love of the Game: Baseball in Early U.S.-Japanese Encounters and the Rise of a Transnational Sporting Fraternity," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (November 2004), 637 – 662. Managers of U.S. baseball teams regularly visited the Tokyo Rotary club, often because they were already Rotarians in the United States. See, for example, Rotarian Carl Zamloch, "athletic instructor" for U.C. Berkeley, "who came with the baseball team" to visit the Tokyo Rotary club and Rotarian Baxter of Los Angeles, coach of the Southern Pacific University baseball team, *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part II, 1 June 1927, 57 and 31 May 1928, 205 (respectively) and the visit of Ishii, Captain of the Tokyo baseball team, introduced to the Tokyo club by Rotarian Hiranuma of Yokohama and president of that city's Athletic Association. Ishii told the Tokyo Rotarians that several of his men "have made visits to the United States on a baseball tour, and they were always honoured by being invited to the Rotary luncheon at various places..." *Ibid.*, Part III, 13 August 1930, 154.

<sup>252</sup> For the best historical survey of the Institute of Pacific Relations, see Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan, and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919 – 1945* (London: Routledge, 2002).

relations – unlike the U.S.-Japan Societies.<sup>253</sup> And as a businessmen’s luncheon club, RI drew upon the upper echelons of Japanese economic elites for its membership – unlike the YMCA and similar organizations.<sup>254</sup> But most importantly, the singular success of Rotary clubs in Japan before 1941 allowed one of the most familiar elements of Main Street to enter the everyday world of Japan’s urban, industrial elites and offer itself as a normative model for social and business relations within the Japanese context. What did Horikoshi, his fellow Japanese Rotarians, and their counterparts in the United States and all around the world, believe RI’s “perfect democracy” to mean? What were the consequences of that belief?

Just as the Wichita Rotarians were finally fulfilling their dreams of economic growth by turning to military spending by the U.S. government in a time of total war, their fellow Rotarians of Japan were experiencing the nightmares of that warfare as the industrial output of U.S. cities like Wichita laid waste to Japanese cities in a “war without mercy.” Yet, amid the frenzied racism driving the attempted eradication of the Japanese enemy lay an undercurrent of international engagement and imagined co-destinies within RI’s “perfect democracy” that became hidden as Japanese “day-of-the-week” clubs that dodged the surveillance of the Japanese government in wartime and then sprang to life as re-born Rotary clubs under the encouraging eye of General MacArthur and eager support of veteran Japanese Rotarians and sympathetic Japanese political leadership. The palimpsest of racial relations between the United States and Japan had many layers –

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<sup>253</sup> See, for example, Makoto Iokibe, “U.S.-Japan Intellectual Exchange: The Relationship between Government and Private Foundations,” chapter 3, in Tadashi, et al, *Philanthropy and Reconciliation*, 61 – 100.

<sup>254</sup> See Manako Ogawa, “The ‘White Ribbons League of Nations’ Meets Japan: The Trans-Pacific Activism of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, 1906 – 1930,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 2007), 21 – 50.

some not so bloody as others. How RI's civic internationalism took root and developed in Japan during the interwar period demonstrates in microcosm some of the complexities of these relations and how they spilled over the parameters of U.S.-Japanese relations into East Asia in general.

### **The Heartland Abroad – Tokyo Style**

The summer of 1928 was a busy time for the Tokyo Rotary Club. In late July, both the Marquis Tokugawa, longtime speaker of the House of Peers, and Mr. Ariyoshi, the Mayor of Yokohama, entertained the eighty members in attendance at that week's luncheon. As always, the club meeting was held in English. The Marquis first pointed out the club's growing reputation in Tokyo and throughout Japan and then joked about the need for such regimented time management in the House of Peers since every speaker before the club was strictly limited to five minutes by a large clock. The Tokyo Rotarians' strict sense of time and efficiency during their luncheons was notorious.

Mayor Ariyoshi's comments, however, went much further. Quite the regular attendee at the Yokohama club's meetings, he was more than familiar with the practices, beliefs, and goals of the international service club. He argued that "what churches had done for the advancement of the moral standard in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Rotary [was] doing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>255</sup> Ariyoshi not only saw RI as the vanguard of modern, international business standards, but also as a moral force for good in the world at large. But the globality of his vision for Rotary's secular calling in the emerging world of international business was imbued with a strong sense of Japanese identity as well since:

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<sup>255</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part III, 27 June 192, 223 – 225.



...that patriotism which brought about the restoration of the Imperial Government at the beginning of the Meiji era was the same as this spirit of Rotary. The idea of Rotary existed in Japan even then; but now it has become the prime factor in business morality, advocated by the influential business and professional men of the world.<sup>256</sup>

As such, Ariyoshi argued, it was imperative that the Yokohama and Tokyo Rotary clubs deepen their ties and co-operation in the future. Since Yokohama and Tokyo shared the same harbor, this was only a matter of time anyway. But Ariyoshi's belief that the two city's Rotary clubs could serve as an informal meeting ground for the commercial elites of each city and as conduits for forging international business ties for those elites is revealing. For many key Japanese politicians and businessmen (many in attendance at such club events as guests if not members), the Rotary club was a neutral platform, a means of building bridges between distinct groups of urban elites within Japan.

In recognition of this fact, only one week before the visit by Ariyoshi and the Marquis, Japan's six clubs were granted formal district status within RI by the headquarters in Chicago. In the organizational structure of RI, the district represented the most significant organizational layer between an individual club, RI's headquarters in Chicago, and all other clubs in the world. A "district," in short, was the closest administrative layer to state structures. In effect, the move confirmed the transformation of the Tokyo club from outpost to regional hub within a few short years and reflected the emerging status of Japan itself as a central player not only in RI but in the world of international business and politics as well. RI's president Everett W. Hill in 1924 – 25, in fact, had already promised as much a few years earlier:

Your club is an important integral unit in Rotary International and you play an important part in your community life... I want you to feel that

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 225 – 26.

your International Officers and Directors, as well as the International Office in Chicago, are at your service...that we may all be brought into closer contact with one another. For we are all working for the same purpose, striving for the same objectives, hoping to attain that goal toward which we are looking – the goal of International Peace and fellowship.<sup>257</sup>

Hill, an ice manufacturer from Oklahoma City, knew the business language of “service” well. Written in the pleasant tone of a customer service representative to a valued client, Hill’s letter reinforced how the Tokyo Rotarians already saw themselves and foreshadowed RI’s own administrative adaptations to the Tokyo club’s influence in East Asia. As rooted in the world of public relations and customer service as the civic activism of Progressive Era politics, RI’s civic internationalism proved a useful instrument in developing a new language of diplomatic relations among key elements of Japanese and U.S. businessmen.

The newly formed seventieth international district, as a result, encompassed clubs not only in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kobe, Kyoto, and Yokohama, but also in Shanghai, Peking, Tientsin, Nanking as well as three up and coming clubs in Manchuria (Mukden, Harbin, and Dairen) and one in Seoul (or Chosên, according to the Japanese). That the seventieth district did not exactly replicate national boundaries nor political structures was deliberate. The internationality of the seventieth district was designed to demonstrate RI’s commitment to creating an international organization in its fullest sense.<sup>258</sup> The governor of the new district was none other than Yoneyama, now President

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<sup>257</sup> RI President Everett W. Hill to Tokyo club president Eigo Fukai, 15 October 1924, reprinted in *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part I, 85 – 86.

<sup>258</sup> This administrative feature contrasted with the “national councils” of the Institute of Pacific Relations and other non-state organizations like the YMCA that tended to mimic national and state structures in their own organizations. It also inevitably led to many complications in the 1930s, ultimately requiring the creation of the eighty-first district in 1936, which included 21 clubs in China, Hong Kong, and Manila/the Philippines. The Chinese Rotarians eagerly interpreted their own “district” status as affirmation of their own interests and identities within the

of the Mitsui Trust Bank as well as a member of RI's International Board of Directors in 1926 – 27. In only six years, the “father of Japanese Rotary” had ascended to the highest possible level of RI's international organization apart from being its worldwide president. Respect and notoriety for Rotary in Japan followed a similar arc of success.

In every way possible, RI embraced the growth of Rotary clubs in Japan and endorsed the local autonomy of those clubs as part of a broader strategy of expansion into the Pacific Basin as a whole. Consequently, Tokyo's hosting of the Second Pacific Rotary Conference in early October 1928 would, in effect, be its coming out party as scores of delegates and VIPs from China, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Hawaii, and the mainland United States were to attend.<sup>259</sup> Joining RI's own VIPs and new international president, Tom Sutton of Tampico, Mexico, were the highest ranks of Japanese government and industry possible. In anticipation of the conference, classes in English, western dance, and community singing began the following week. The Japanese businessmen and their wives and children needed to learn very un-Japanese ways of social interaction in order to play host to so many Rotarian visitors from so many

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world of Rotary International. See, for example, “The Rotary Supplement,” *The Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*, 19 April 1937, Chicago One Archives, “Other Clubs”/ Shanghai.  
<sup>259</sup> For a full detailed account of the preparation for and hosting of the Second Rotary Pacific Conference by the Tokyo club in early October 1928, see *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club* (Tokyo Rotary Club: Tokyo, 1940), Part II, 217 – 316. The parallels between the goals and activities of the Institute of Pacific Relations, established in 1925, and RI's series of Rotary Pacific Conferences between 1926 and 1935 are remarkable. The Pacific Rotary conferences were held in the following cities and years: Honolulu (1926), Tokyo (1928), Sydney (1930), Honolulu (1932), Manila (1935), and Wellington (1937). Unlike the IPR, however, RI also held international conventions and scores of district conferences annually and regional conferences on a regular basis before World War II, including European Regional Conferences at The Hague (1930), Lausanne (1934), Venice (1934) as well as a Latin American Conference at Valparaiso (1936) and a Caribbean Conference in Havana (1937). On RI's evolving custom of regional conferences, see “Report of the Commission on Rotary International Administration,” in *Convention Proceedings, Twentieth-Eighth Annual International*; 6 – 11 June 1937; Nice, France; Chapter II, “The Present Organization and Structure of R.I.,” 31.

different countries and cultures.<sup>260</sup> Ariyoshi's syncretism of the Meiji Restoration with RI's civic internationalism could only meld so much together at a time. In the world of business, one could not afford to be too exotic.

### **Civic Internationalism – Tokyo Style**

The emphasis on philanthropic and civic activities was very real. Before the Marquis and the Mayor spoke to the Tokyo Rotarians, that day's meeting began with a small but revealing transaction. The Club's Board of Directors had sent a "message of sympathy" to the Lima Rotary Club because of the recent "disastrous earthquake" in Chachapoyas, Peru. The club had just sent a donation of \$250 to the relief fund to "loud applause." Though it might seem like so much back-patting and self-congratulation, there was good reason. On the first of September 1923, Tokyo experienced a massive earthquake resulting in tens of thousands of casualties. The fifty members of the relatively young and untested service club became a nexus point for receiving relief funds from fellow clubs in the Americas, Europe, and the Antipodes. In the end, over 73,000 ¥en were donated from 374 individual clubs in the U.S. and Canada and another 92 clubs mostly in Great Britain and Mexico. The Chicago office of RI also wired \$25,000 in support within days of the catastrophe.

RI's actions formed only one part of a broader relief effort as the U.S. fleet entered Yokohama with emergency provisions within the week. Yoneyama saw RI's support as part of a greater international effort as he recounted how:

the American government sent General McCoy with a Red Cross corps. Ship after ship came in from the States loaded with food, clothing, and

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<sup>260</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part II, 227.

building materials. When both General McCoy and Ambassador Wood were leaving Japan, old and young were seen lined up at the station to express their heartfelt thanks for the kindness of the American Government.<sup>261</sup>

In the midst of Tokyo's near destruction, the benevolent power of the United States became manifest in a two-pronged humanitarian outreach through its military and through private relief agencies, of naval logistics and institutional charity. The Tokyo Rotarians understood their club's collection of \$250 for relief efforts in Chachapoyas, Peru within this greater context of international cooperation in times of crisis.

The grateful sentiments of the Japanese bidding farewell to McCoy and Wood paralleled those held by Yoneyama and his fellow club members. Yoneyama understood the value of sentiment and symbol well, as he:

showed the members [of the Tokyo club] a Rotary badge which was given to him by an American friend. It had been dug out of the ashes of his office and miraculously found to retain its original shape and color. In showing it he said, 'Like this little badge, the Rotary spirit lives and shines through earthquake and fire.' He then urged the members to be more active and to show their appreciation of what the Rotarians have done for Japan in this time of great disaster.<sup>262</sup>

Their sense of appreciation toward the international community and civic obligation toward their own citizens became manifest in the rebuilding of 188 schools throughout Japan, along with re-supplying them with maps and blackboards over a period of several years. The remainder of funds, meanwhile, went toward a charity hospital and an orphan asylum. The club was very careful to account for all expenses before their Rotarian brethren as proof of fulfillment of their fiduciary roles.<sup>263</sup> The transparency of the club's actions and spending was crucial to forging its reputation within the "world fellowship of

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<sup>261</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club* (Tokyo Rotary Club: Tokyo, 1940), Part I, 24 – 25.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>263</sup> In fact, four Tokyo Rotarians were put on the Board of Reconstruction by the Japanese government: Isomura, Ito, Wada, and Yoneyama. *History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part 1, 40.

business and professional men.” The Tokyo Rotary Club’s first real step into philanthropic activity was quite literally a baptism by fire.<sup>264</sup>

There was another first for the club in the midst of that conflagration. The Tokyo club’s first and only “alien” member at the time, Edward D. Berton, used his automobile non-stop as an ambulance for days afterward, resulting in “high recognition both from his own Government and from ours.”<sup>265</sup> “Ed” Berton, a representative of U.S. Steel in Japan, joined the Tokyo club in March 1922 and was classified officially on the club register as working in “Steel-Distributing.” In fact, his first speech to the club was on the history of U.S. Steel and its management practices. Berton also had the respect of the club as he “spared no pains in helping the needy and visiting the sick,” leading to the creation of the club’s Visiting Committee. Having introduced the club to community singing as well as charity work and modern corporate governance, “Ed” Berton was seen by his fellow Japanese Rotarians as the paradigmatic Rotarian – and he was their creation, their first “Japan-made Rotarian from America!”

It was a sad day in late July 1928, therefore, as Berton prepared for his return to the States because of a promotion within U.S. Steel. The club’s sense of loss upon Ed’s departure was sincere and meaningful. The shared intimacy between Berton and his fellow Tokyo Rotarians over a six year period was not to be found in any factory, boardroom, hotel lobby, or conference hall. Could Rotary’s “perfect democracy” transcend the profit margins of U.S. Steel and the Mitsui Bank and hold out the promise of bridging the many cultural and political differences between the two Pacific powers

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<sup>264</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part I, 24 – 43. Berton also managed to lighten his first time speaking before the club by having a friend bring a guitar and teaching the fifty Japanese club members to sing “The man who had plenty of good peanuts.”

<sup>265</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part I, 238 – 239.

through such close, personal ties? It was possible. “Ed” Berton – Tokyo’s first homegrown non-Japanese Rotarian – embodied that hope.

Nor was the sentiment unprecedented or unrequited. Berton’s heroics in the aftermath of the 1923 earthquake were matched by one of his own fellow Rotarians of Tokyo. When Rotarian E.L. Irvine of Kalamazoo, Michigan visited a few years after Berton’s departure, he recounted how Watari Kitashima, stock broker and partner of Kitashima & Co., received a telegraph from the Kalamazoo club inquiring about the fate of their very own Mr. Williams and his wife, who had been in Yokohama at the time the devastating earthquake struck. ‘Kitty’ Kitashima

actually walked the approximately eighteen miles to Yokohama and, after great difficulty, ascertained that both Mr. and Mrs. Williams had met death in the great disaster. This service of ‘Kitty’ which was so unselfishly rendered at a great sacrifice to himself, has created a deep feeling of affection in the hearts of all the members of the Rotary Club of Kalamazoo for Kitashima, and has bound the Rotary Club of Kalamazoo to the Rotary Club of Tokyo in an enduring manner.<sup>266</sup>

It is not often that these two cities appear in the same sentence, let alone in such an intimate, personal way. The institutional link was an international service club and the ideological framework RI’s civic internationalism.

And international links were Kitashima’s specialty. By 1930, “Kitty” had become a veritable celebrity among the 153,000 Rotarians in 3,300 clubs spread throughout most of the Americas, Europe, East Asia, and the Antipodes. But not because of his service to Kalamazoo. Rather, as the club’s stalwart secretary, “Kitty” took it upon himself in 1923 to begin writing up in English and then distributing the club’s weekly bulletins to all the clubs of the world. The practice continued well into the 1930s and had

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<sup>266</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part III, 69 – 73.

a long-lasting effect on the thousands of clubs receiving Kitty's weekly bulletins. As a result, club president Noboru Ohtani reported that, while attending the 1928 annual international convention in Minneapolis as Japan's representative, he

had the opportunity of talking with very many of the American delegates and I found them without exception keenly interested in Rotary in Japan and very sympathetic with our work. I listened to many complimentary and commendatory remarks about our Tokyo bulletin, and also about the special book 'Japan' which we published last year.<sup>267</sup>

Meanwhile, Ohtani himself added to the prestige of the Japanese Rotarians during his visit as guest speaker on Chicago's WMAQ radio station the evenings of June 16 and 17, 1928, along with Dr. Eduardo Moore of Santiago, Chile; Kenneth Young of Capetown, South Africa; and Dr. Edouard Willems of Brussels, Belgium.<sup>268</sup> RI's civic internationalism had its moments as cultural links were made and boundaries traversed in the name of greater international peace and cooperation. The "ideology of global interdependence" had quite an audience throughout America's heartland.

There was a weekly audience in every Rotary club of Japan and East Asia as well. Just as Wall Street was undergoing its worst nightmares in late October 1929, the Tokyo Rotary club was playing host, as always, to a dozen or more international visitors at its weekly meeting. But the combination of visitors that week was unusually revealing – as were their comments. Rotarian Wong, of the Peiping Rotary Club, was the first to speak, drawing parallels between the annual district conference of Rotary clubs in Japan and China being held in Kyoto the same week the World Engineering and the World Power Congress were going on in Tokyo: "We are having meetings like those of the Rotarians, for there is no racial or diplomatic boundary in science, and each and all are exchanging

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., Part II, 239 – 244.

<sup>268</sup> *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Convention of Rotary International*; Minneapolis, Minnesota; 18 – 22 June 1928; 8 – 9.



ideas for the advancement of civilization of the world; and [I feel] so happy to attend such a meeting as an engineer and as a Rotarian.” Since the Tokyo club did not often have visitors from Peiping, Rotarian Wong’s presence and assertions were eagerly received. The next speaker, H.H. Dow, from “the state of Henry Ford,” told of his earlier visit to Tokyo before the 1923 earthquake and his particular interest in Japanese gardening. In fact, on his prior trip back to the U.S. on a steamer, he met a Japanese landscape architect, Takuma Tono, who ended up assisting him “in laying out a park in his home town after the Japanese style, which is now the pride of the town.” Tono first became a member of Dow’s Rotary club in Michigan and then, upon his return to Tokyo, became a Rotarian in his native city. Rotarian Dow and Tono, in other words, had known each other for years and were quite familiar with each other’s hometowns.

But it fell to Rotarian Senda of Calcutta to capture best the complexities of RI’s civic internationalism that day, portraying the ten year old Rotary club of Calcutta as:

struggling against unimaginable difficulties and prejudices of race, religion, and caste distinction. The club, however, has made a steady growth and now has nearly 100 members, embracing Mohammedans, Hindoos, Englishmen, Americans, French and other nationalities. It is really the ‘League of Nations’ in itself, and they are all united under the banner of the Rotary precepts.

Senda’s vision of religious and cultural pluralism swirled together in a melting pot of business internationalism was a tough act to follow for Rotarian Hunt of Moline, Illinois. Instead, he stood up, gave “extended hearty greetings from his home club, saying he would be delighted to tell his home people about the interesting meeting he had attended in Tokyo,” and then returned to his seat so that the meeting’s featured speaker, Mr. Bouter, the Commercial Attaché of the British Embassy, might begin that week’s speech before the Tokyo club. The mix of professions, businesses, nationalities, and races in the

Tokyo club offered itself up as a showcase for RI's civic internationalism. For Rotarian Hunt of Moline, and tens of thousands like him back in the United States reading about the Japanese Rotarians in RI's many publications, it probably was a very "interesting meeting." But the Tokyo club was not limited to RI's interpretations of its purpose, growth, and activities. The club was finding its own voice, and it intended to use it.

### **Welcome to "Japan"**

Watari Kitashima's weekly "Tokyo bulletin" sent to over 350 Rotary clubs outside Japan was only one of two principal reasons for the growing curiosity on the part of Main Street's best known denizens in the success of Rotary in far-off Japan.<sup>269</sup> The other was a book simply named "Japan," published by the Tokyo club in 1927, that took the boosterism of Tokyo's Rotarians to a whole new level of sophistication. In response to interest expressed by U.S. clubs in learning more about Japan, RI's Chicago office wrote the Tokyo club asking for a "pamphlet" that could be used by all clubs in the U.S. and Canada for preparing "20 to 30 minute presentations" on Japan in their meetings. Instead of a short pamphlet, the Tokyo club produced a gem that far exceeded RI's prosaic expectations.

Replete with photos, printed in gorgeous text and colors, and distributed to thousands of Rotary clubs worldwide – all at the Tokyo club's expense, "Japan" was the club's attempt to introduce and explain both Japanese industry and culture to all their Rotarian brethren. It was the perfect marriage of business information and cultural representation. The beautiful, nuanced, ancient culture of Japan also happened to be a

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<sup>269</sup> As Club Secretary, Kitashima actually ran a small office that also sent out an average of 50 letters a month in response to inquiries from other Rotary clubs around the world. *History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part III, 118.

wise, stable place for investment and an emerging industrial power eager to build bridges of commerce with the United States and the world. Though the imagery throughout screamed the exotic – a Japan far away and emphatically non-western in culture, history, language, religion, art, and architecture, the book spoke the language of modern international business. Not only was the text written in a smooth English vernacular, but the whole approach – the very manner in which the Japanese clubs packaged and represented themselves, their cities, and their country – was couched in the idiom of RI’s civic internationalism. Kitty’s fans in Kalamazoo, to be sure, loved “Japan.”<sup>270</sup> The Tokyo club’s own publication and international distribution of Japan, therefore, stands out as a focal point of international engagement between Japan and every Rotary club outside Japan and as a kind of proto-nationalist document asserting Japan’s claim as an emerging industrial power in the Pacific.<sup>271</sup>

After presenting the music and lyrics of the Japanese national anthem and giving a brief explanation of the meaning of the Japanese flag, the book launches into a series of chapters that explain how Japan moved from a secretive, “hermit” country before 1854 to the Meiji Restoration of 1868 to a constitutional form of government in 1889 with a bicameral Parliament to the industrial powerhouse of Asia in the early twentieth century. In effect, the book itself was a kind of national anthem, since the story of Japan’s unfolding national destiny was clear:

Because of the onward sweep of democracy, particularly since the world war [i.e., World War I], the House of Representatives is growing in power,

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<sup>270</sup> Lester B. Struthers, Assistant Secretary of RI, to Special Commissioner Isaka, 13 October 1926, reprinted in *Japan* (Tokyo Rotary Club: Tokyo, 1927), introduction, n.p.

<sup>271</sup> In many ways, the cultural diplomacy intended with Tokyo club’s publication of “Japan” anticipated the creation of the International Culture Promotion Association by the Japanese government in 1934. Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*, 216.

and no cabinet is now able to function smoothly without the support of the political party or parties that command the majority in the House.

The promises of a modern political form of government were paying off, since the “practice of party cabinet being established, the politics of Japan will gradually come to resemble that of Great Britain, with two parties in the House to take turns in organizing cabinets.” But, like the Western powers, democracy had its limits, as the colonies of Japan would also “resemble more or less the crown colonies of the British Empire with appointed Governor-generals and no elected assemblies.”<sup>272</sup> As with the British, why should modernizing Japan’s industrial base and expanding its commercial ties worldwide preclude Japanese colonialism? Just as the Europeans and Americans schooled their colonies in the ways of modern industry and representative democracy, so would the Japanese. With time, the lesser nations and possessions would achieve a modicum of independence. With time.

In fact, from the table of contents and the list of contributors, one can readily see the outline of the six Japanese clubs’ strategies for marketing their country before the world’s Rotary clubs. They knew their Rotarian audience well.

| <b><u>Chapter Title:</u></b>                   | <b><u>Author:</u></b>   | <b><u>Occupation/Corporation:</u></b>               |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| History and Present Type of Government         | Yusuke Tsurumi          | “Municipal Administrator”                           |
| Geography and Topography of Japan              | Chuji Inomata, F.R.G.S. | General Manager, Japan Tourist Bureau               |
| Natural Resources and Foreign Commerce         | Takashi Isaka           | President, Yokohama Fire and Marine Insurance Co.   |
| Mercantile Marine of Japan                     | Noboru Ohtani           | Director, Nippon Yusen Kaisha                       |
| Industry                                       | Junichiro Imaoka        | President, Uruga Dock Co.                           |
| Present Foreign Wireless Communication Systems | Baron Yasushi Togo      | Managing Director, Japan Wireless Telegraph Company |

<sup>272</sup> *Japan*, Chap 1, 5.

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| Journalism in Japan  | Kotaro Sugimura                          | Chief, Intelligence Dept.,<br>Asahi Shinbun    |
| Education and Religion   | Rt. Rev. Bishop Charles S.<br>Reifsnider | President, St. Pauls<br>College, Tokyo         |
| Customs and Traditions   | Daniel H. Blake                          | Vice-President, Frazar<br>Trust Company        |
| Development of Dramatic<br>Art in Japan  | Kyuzaburo Yamamoto                       | Managing Director,<br>Imperial Theatre         |
| Chosen (Korea)   | Katusaburo Watanabe                      | President, The Oriental<br>Development Company |
| Karafuto (Saghalien)   | Reisuke Danno                            | Managing Director,<br>Nichiro<br>Fishing Co.   |
| Historical and Commercial<br>Reviews of Cities, where<br>Rotary is established | By each club                             | Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya,<br>Kobe, Kyoto, Yokohama |

Source: "Japan" (Tokyo: Tokyo Rotary Club, 1927), Table of Contents.

The Tokyo club's message was clear: The Japanese Empire was a friendly empire and its expansion into mainland Asia both benign and inevitable. In particular, the final two chapters on Korea and the Sakhalin Islands present those Japanese colonial possessions in the simplest logic of empire: "[Korea's] easy access to the most promising markets in the world, China, Manchuria, and Siberia is in itself a great economic asset.... Its proximity to Japan will be of even greater significance now that fate has combined the two."<sup>273</sup> Katusaburo Watanabe, President of The Oriental Development Company and classified in the club as "Colonization Service," further explained that Korea's "healthy, industrious and willing native population provides a plentiful supply of labour," which left "little room to doubt the great economic possibilities of the country."<sup>274</sup> Proximity, cheap labor, and regional economic growth were Watanabe's selling points to his Rotarian counterparts. For every Rotary club in the U.S., the conclusion was simple: Korea ought to be a satellite of Japan. It was not a foreign concept. The Tokyo businessmen had their country's own version of the Monroe Doctrine. Apparently, no

<sup>273</sup> *Japan*, p. 98.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99.

one in the U.S. voiced concern or raised a question. Though Watanabe remained within the club for less than three years, his presence in the club and his contribution to the Tokyo club's book demonstrated the intertwining nature of empire and market penetration, of expansion and resource extraction.

Watanabe's translation of Japanese imperial aspirations into the soft, pragmatic tones of modern business English, however, found even smoother, subtler expression in Noboru Ohtani's review of Japanese shipping. Serving as the Tokyo club president in 1927 – 28 and Japan's main representative at RI's annual convention held in Minneapolis in 1928, Ohtani presents a narrative of Japan's move from a "hermit country" to "her position as an island country, which, in relation with the continent of Asia, closely resembles that of the British Isles in the latter's relation with the Continent of Europe..."<sup>275</sup> Ohtani was in accord with the book's overall theme. Though the "serious depression in shipping" Japan experienced from 1920 to the time of Ohtani's writing in 1927 resulted in a "severe test," Ohtani put much faith in his own company's recent absorption of the Toyo Kisen Kaisha's Pacific services: "By this important consummation, the Nippon Yusen Kaisha has become a more powerful concern than ever, now ranking third among the world's ship-owners." Ohtani eagerly pointed out the building of three new passenger liners "more than 16,500 tons each" to run between San Francisco and "the Orient" – two at the Mitsubishi Shipbuilding and Engine Works of Nagasaki and one at the Kawasaki Dockyards in Kobe. Business looked up. The world was shrinking as commerce applied new technologies in transportation to annihilate distance and overcome difference. Japan and the United States were partners in

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<sup>275</sup> *Japan*, p. 34.

developing the Pacific Basin. With great confidence, Ohtani concluded that upon the “restoration of the peaceful industries and commerce to a normal condition, with the consequent recovery of the world’s purchasing power, the Japanese Mercantile Marine will continue to have its due share in contributing to the peaceful needs, and so enhancing the prosperity and happiness of mankind at large.”<sup>276</sup> No Rotarian from the U.S. could have put it better.<sup>277</sup> And there was good reason why they knew so well how to package their country’s expansion into Asia for consumption in the United States. Though the Tokyo club sang its national anthem before each weekly meeting in Japanese before their Japanese flag, the members almost always spoke English during their weekly luncheons. With so many non-Japanese visitors at the Bankers’ Club each week, it even became a point of pride.<sup>278</sup>

Rotary’s language of civic internationalism served other purposes for the Tokyo club and its political allies in Japan as well. In 1924, when Baron Matsui spoke at the Tokyo club’s celebration of Rotary’s nineteenth anniversary of its founding in Chicago, he saw no reason to hold back: “There is no East and there is no West today... Men everywhere have come to realize the wisdom of a policy of international cooperation rather than one of rivalry,” and then added that “the wise nation, like the wise business

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<sup>276</sup> *Japan*, 41.

<sup>277</sup> Ohtani hit such a chord within RI’s ranks that he became a member of RI’s Board of Directors in 1933 – 34, a position also held by Yoneyama more than once. Only RI’s international president ranked higher and only RI’s long-serving General Secretary, Chesley Perry, had more input on all significant administrative issues and policies.

<sup>278</sup> Note on meeting at Bankers’ Club in Tokyo from 1920 until ??? Indication of position of power and prestige within Japanese society and economy. Also, the many visitors from ships coming into port. The club’s first visitor “from abroad” was Rotarian Sidney F. Mashbir, hailing from Syracuse, New York, on 10 May 1922. He was the first of thousands until September 1940. *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part 1, meeting of 10 May 1922, 16.

man, has come to see that its best interests run in the same channel as its best instincts. It is, happily, a new era upon which we are launched.”<sup>279</sup>

Serving as the Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, Baron Matsui reflected “the politics of good intentions” of the 1920s.<sup>280</sup> Despite the passage of the National Origins Act of 1924 in the U.S. and the limitations placed on Japan’s “Asian Monroeism” by the treaties of the Washington Conference of 1922, there remained much hope during the period in successful collaboration with the United States in particular and with the League of Nations in general. The Tokyo Rotarians were in full accord. The following year, at the Tokyo club’s twentieth anniversary celebration of Rotary’s birth in Chicago in 1905, Japan’s Prime Minister Kato gave his own interpretation of Rotary’s “Sixth Object” on international friendship and peace: “But the world has learned its lesson – bitter for those of evil intent, comforting and fortifying for those of sound ideals. We are entering an era in which the pursuit of national interests is accompanied by the perception that the welfare of one depends on the welfare of all others.”<sup>281</sup> Speaking just after the Prime Minister, Baron Shidehara, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, linked RI’s civic internationalism directly with Japan’s foreign policy goals by proclaiming: “The settled desire of Japan is to avoid as she has ever avoided, all aggression on others, and to see all her sister nations, great and small, putting forth their utmost efforts...for the common good of mankind.” Shidehara’s well known policy of international cooperation had an eager ally with the Japanese Rotary clubs and their many counterparts abroad:

No work can be better worth doing, and few organizations are so well qualified to undertake it. Governments cannot do it. They are not

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<sup>279</sup> *Japan*, 118.

<sup>280</sup> Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000).

<sup>281</sup> *Japan*, 118.



sociable institutions... religions cannot do it. They are too diverse. Formal Peace Societies cannot do it... They are too specialized. Real good fellowship between the nations must rest on a foundation of real personal intimacy and good feeling. That good fellowship is the very object and kernel of the Rotary conception. If...you can turn it into the channel of international relations, you will be fulfilling one of the most urgent needs of mankind.<sup>282</sup>

The Tokyo Rotarians promised to do just that. The spirit of Wilsonianism pervaded the Japanese Rotarians' civic internationalism.

The club was already a useful instrument for cultural diplomacy, and getting better. The same month Shidehara and Kato gave their ringing endorsement of Rotary International's goals, the club took in six new members. Two of those new members were Yukichi Iwanaga, listed euphemistically as a journalist, and Yusuke Tsurumi, classified under "railway service." Just as the Tokyo club and Shidehara asserted their common foreign policy goals at the club's twentieth anniversary celebration of RI's founding, so the induction of Iwanaga and Tsurumi into the Tokyo Rotary club in February 1924 marked an important confluence of public and private interests. The two men were old friends before becoming fellow Rotarians. After he founded the *Uiruson kurabu* – the Wilson Club – in 1915, Tsurumi had Iwanaga as one of several guest speakers at the debating club.<sup>283</sup>

While the Wilson Club's name revealed Tsurumi's own devotion to a Wilsonian vision of international relations, the club itself proved to be a breeding ground for a small circle of national elites devoted to service to the Japanese state and the promotion of its interests abroad. Having Iwanaga speak at the Wilson Club was an obvious move for

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 118 – 119.

<sup>283</sup> On the international appeal of Wilsonian rhetoric in Asia, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Tsurumi. While working for the South Manchurian Railway from 1911 – 1917, Iwanaga saw how foreign news agencies – Reuters in particular – determined how Japan’s actions were interpreted by the rest of the world mainly because there was no comparable news agency in Japan itself. Iwanaga sought to remedy the situation by creating his own news agency in 1920 – hence his classification as “journalist” in Rotary. But there was much more to him:

Iwanaga’s idea of a national news press agency was...more to do with his sense of duty to the state/empire as a member of the national elite and a post-League internationalist. His duty was to present a ‘correct’ picture of ‘Japan’ and ensure that the ‘Japanese view’ was understood ‘correctly’ in the world.<sup>284</sup>

As if establishing his own news agency weren’t enough, he lobbied for a national news agency as well, resulting in the creation of *Rengo* in 1926.<sup>285</sup> Though Iwanaga did not contribute directly to the Tokyo Rotary club’s publication of “Japan,” he was certainly a supporter of its overall purpose for many reasons beyond his status within the Rotary club. Iwanaga was already doing his fair share of boosterism for Japan. Boundaries between state and non-state sponsored forms of international boosterism during this period were quite blurred.

Iwanaga’s old friend, Yusuke Tsurumi, however, did contribute directly to the Tokyo Rotarians’ efforts at boosterism. As the author of the opening chapter on Japan’s “History and Present Type of Government,” it fell to Tsurumi to introduce Japan – or, at least “Japan” – in its entirety. The Tokyo Rotarians not only knew their audience of fellow Rotarians well, they also knew who could reach them best. Only six months after Tsurumi’s induction into Rotary and in full anticipation of Japan’s involvement in the

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<sup>284</sup> Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*, p. 202.

<sup>285</sup> Akami, 202.

Institute of Pacific Relations after 1926, he traveled to North America for a year and a half, lecturing at universities, conferences, and institutions such as the Foreign Policy Association. He was an excellent and tireless promoter of Japan as a “liberal” nation on the move away from militarism and toward full partnership in the burgeoning post-World War I international system.<sup>286</sup> Tsurumi’s point was the same, no matter where he spoke: “For over two and a half centuries Japan had no wars both internally and externally. Peace as a practical phase of national life is not new with us.” When summarizing his long lecture tour in North America for the Tokyo Rotary club, Tsurumi also observed:

I think the guests of this evening have found out many things common between Japan and America. You must have been made home-sick by the sight of so many Ford automobiles parked at the curb. And the streets of Tokyo as in Boston are so crooked that you will meet yourselves coming back.<sup>287</sup>

Driving the same mass produced Fords on the winding streets of Tokyo and Boston could only bring the two nations together over time.

Just as Rotarian visitors from the U.S. often preceded their formal greetings to the Tokyo Rotary club after 1924 with disclaimers and caveats on the National Origins Act and its ugly nativism, so Japanese Rotarians often found themselves explaining away Japanese expansionism in Asia and the Pacific to their international visitors and while traveling abroad.<sup>288</sup> The apologetics of nationalist and nativist agendas came from both sides of the Pacific. But armed with a shared faith in the unifying powers of international cooperation, business, and exchange, Rotarians on all continents in the 1920s believed

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<sup>286</sup> Akami, 105.

<sup>287</sup> Yusuke Tsurumi, “International Friendship: An address upon the occasion of a dinner to American guests given by the Rotary club of Tokyo,” *The Rotarian*, November 1926, 21.

<sup>288</sup> When Rotarian Palmer from the Honolulu Rotary club was visiting the Tokyo club, he spoke on the Immigration Laws just passed by the U.S. Congress, saying “it was like the shock of the earthquake that we had last year, but sooner or later things will be restored to normal.” *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part 1, 1 October 1924.

strongly in their ultimate capacity to move beyond the obstacles of national, regional, and local rivalries and differences.<sup>289</sup> Time was on their side.

### **Framing the Exotic Peer**

Tsurumi's message dovetailed so well with Rotary's vision of world fellowship that RI's international monthly magazine, *The Rotarian*, featured him twice in 1926. While the second article was a reprint of the speech he gave at the Tokyo Rotary club after returning from his long lecture tour in the U.S., Tsurumi's first appearance, though much shorter, revealed much more in its context. Presented as one of four "Rotarians in the Public Eye" and listed as a "municipal administrator" in Tokyo, Tsurumi gets credit for being the effective advocate of Japanese culture and business in the U.S. that he was. What stands out, however, is the company Tsurumi keeps: George F. Johnson, president of the Endicott-Johnson shoe company in Binghamton, New York; Hugh E. Van de Walker, life insurance salesman in Ypsilanti, Michigan; and Roger Miller, head of the National School for Commercial Organization Executives, from Asheville, North Carolina. Each of the four had their own reasons for receiving such attention: Johnson's company offered profit-sharing to its employees – a model of welfare capitalism; Van de Walker sold life insurance at record rates; and Miller held national prominence as a leader of Chamber of Commerce executives. Surrounded by a benevolent corporate executive, a highly successful insurance salesman, and an outstanding executive for the

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<sup>289</sup> In Tsurumi's case, however, his attitude changed after election to the Japanese Diet in 1928. As Akami points out: "His criticism of the international order and the League of Nations became stronger after Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933. He argued that peace for Britain, the United States, the USSR and France meant that they would preserve their privilege. 'Real' peace, he continued, would not come until Japan achieved 'justice' by abolishing these countries' racial discrimination and unfair tariffs." Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*, 86.

Chamber of Commerce, Yusuke Tsurumi seemed safe and normal – an exemplary Rotarian who was more than welcome at any local club’s luncheon. The effect was deliberate. Like many other articles, portraits, and interviews before and after, the editors of *The Rotarian* often slipped non-U.S. Rotarians into the pages of their monthly magazine in ways that normalized their presence in the everyday world of RI’s readership. Dressed up and presented just like his fellow Rotarians, the administrator from far off Tokyo tamed the exotic through his respectability and accessibility. Yusuke Tsurumi was a man with whom one could do business.

The Tokyo club returned the favor in 1927 by choosing two U.S. members of their own club as contributors to its glossy publication, “Japan.” Oddly enough, Bishop Charles S. Reifsnider, President of St. Paul’s College in Tokyo, and Daniel Blake, Vice-President of Frazar Trust Company, wrote on the topics of “Education and Religion” and “Customs and Traditions” of Japan respectively, while Japanese members wrote on the financial, industrial, and political dimensions of their country.<sup>290</sup> The predominance of Japanese contributors to the publication pointed up the relative constitution of the Tokyo club between Japanese and non-Japanese members during the interwar years. Out of 375 members listed over the twenty year period of 1920 – 40, only twenty-four were of non-Japanese origin, with most being from the U.S. and representing mostly private corporate interests ranging from lamp manufacturing to news bureaus to “road-making machinery.”<sup>291</sup> “Ed” Berton of U.S. Steel was not a complete rarity. But the Tokyo club always held its meetings in English out of choice, not necessity. Still, non-Japanese

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<sup>290</sup> The chapter on Japanese theatre was the only “cultural” chapter to be authored by a Japanese member of the club.

<sup>291</sup> History of the Tokyo Club, Part V, Appendix: “List of members arranged in order of their admittance” and “List of former and present members arranged in alphabetical order with the dates of their admittance.”

representation in other Japanese cities' clubs tended to be even less than Tokyo's.<sup>292</sup>

When it came to Rotary's expansion into Japan from 1920 to 1940, there was little difficulty in generating "native" participation and membership growth. With over forty Rotary clubs meeting every week in the late summer of 1940, Japan was as much a thriving part of the "perfect democracy" of Rotary as any other country – if not more so.

### **Tokyo (pop. 2,000,000) meets Augusta, Kansas (pop. 4,000)**

Let us return to the Tokyo club in 1928. Attending the club's mournful farewell to "Ed" Berton that same day in late July was Jesse C. Fisher of Augusta, Kansas, seated with his two nephews. Though it is unclear whether Fisher and Berton actually spoke with each other during or after the meeting, they would have addressed each other as "Jesse" and "Ed" – and in no other way. U.S. Steel's representative in Japan, along with some of the most important businessmen of all Japan, were Jesse Fisher's business and professional peers during that luncheon, fellow members of the "parliament of businessmen" brought together by the world of Rotary. Before introducing Fisher and the other visitors from Yokohama and Seoul, however, the club first welcomed its newest member, Masakazu Takata, Managing Director of the Tokyo Gomu Kogyo K.K. Like all other new members since the club's inception, Mr. Takata had exactly five minutes to speak on his particular business classification, "rubber goods manufacturing." He described the future prospects of the rubber industry as very bright "even if only in the

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<sup>292</sup> As of 1936, for example, Harry L. Sommerer, Managing Director of Victor Talking Machine Co. of Japan, was the only non-Japanese Rotarian ever to serve as a club president in all of the Japanese Rotary clubs. Report by Crawford C. McCullough, Past President of RI, to the President and Board of Directors on his official visit to the 70<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> districts, April – May 1936. File: [China - Japan, Relations between – Data re: CCM's visit to Japan and China Conferences], RI Archives.

making of auto tires, for the number of cars is being increased at a tremendous rate nowadays.” Takata’s reference to an increasing number of automobiles in Japan would undoubtedly have interested Jesse Fisher since his own town of Augusta was labeled as “Oil Center” within Rotary’s own club reports and located near the oil boomtown of El Dorado, Kansas (which got its own Rotary club in 1919, a year after Augusta’s, and where Jake Moellendick got his first plane ride with a young pilot named J. Earl Schaefer to one of his many oil wells).

But Jesse Fisher’s reason for being in Tokyo with his nephews had nothing to do with tires, automobiles, petroleum, or commerce in any form. After his introduction and greetings to the Tokyo Rotarians on behalf of his fellow Rotarians of little Augusta, he remarked that, after only three days into his first visit to Japan, he “felt quite at home attending the Rotary meeting – just the same sort of meeting as they have in America – and after mentioning many things which seemed so familiar to his eyes, he said they did not have an automatic clock in his home club, but thought it was a fine thing and was thinking of taking one back with him.” Oddly enough, Jessie Fisher admired the same clock and strict time management as the Marquis Tokugawa.

He then turned to his nephews and explained that “he thought traveling and seeing the different countries the best education for everybody, and the first step in the realization of the Sixth Object.”<sup>293</sup> Such a cosmopolitan view for a man from a decidedly provincial town in south central Kansas: Fisher attended the Tokyo Rotary club’s luncheon and explained his presence in terms of Rotary’s “Sixth Object” on international peace and cooperation. For Jesse Fisher to be in the Tokyo Rotarians’ weekly lunch spot

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<sup>293</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Vol. II, pp. 241 – 245.; *Augusta Rotary Club Since 1918* (Augusta, Kansas: Augusta Rotary Club, 1968).

at the Bankers' Club, let alone describing the place as a home away from home, was welcome assurance of who they all were and where they were going – together.

All members and visitors of the Tokyo club would have understood exactly what Fisher meant by RI's Sixth Object. But the meaning and value of RI's "sixth object" depended greatly on its audience and location. Formally adopted at Rotary's annual international convention in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1921, the "sixth object" was Rotary's particular commitment to the international expansion of the service club into all the "commercial centers of the world." Yet Augusta, Kansas was hardly a "commercial center of the world" – not even in Kansas. Jesse Fisher was welcomed nonetheless as one of their own. In theory, he was. In theory, Augusta, Kansas and Tokyo, Japan were just different parts of an integrating, globalizing whole. But Umekichi Yoneyama had come to know better:

In America, there seems to be more private business and professional men in the Rotary clubs than the executive officers of the leading firms and companies. In the small towns especially, grocers, shoemakers, etc. are found among the members. There, he said, is the Rotary spirit – the recognition of all useful occupations, and the dignifying by each Rotarian of his occupation as an opportunity to serve society.... All seemed to have fully absorbed the true meaning of Rotary. America being such a large country, however, in some of the smaller places he feared that they do not fully grasp the magnitude of the international nature of Rotary.<sup>294</sup>

In the language of Sinclair Lewis, Yoneyama's observations would easily be understood as a description of Main Street's Babbitts, small town boosters and provincials with little understanding or interest in anything outside their own city limits: Rubes in suspenders and straw hats. Augusta, Kansas in particular serves as an important marker of Rotary's trend toward smaller and smaller locales and lower and lower levels of the managerial,

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<sup>294</sup> *History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part II, 485 – 486.



business, and professional classes since it was one of the earliest “cities” anywhere with a population less than 5,000 to have a Rotary club.<sup>295</sup>

Fisher’s fascination with the Tokyo club’s strict adherence to time limits and meeting agendas contrasted sharply with the biweekly club meetings in Augusta, which in the 1920s and 30s often rolled lackadaisically from dinner time into the late evening. One visitor, in fact, described the Augusta meetings as “very much of a social affair as well as a Rotary club.”<sup>296</sup> Fisher’s and Tokugawa’s shared interest in the club’s time management techniques reflected the two very different worlds in which they moved: a small service club in a small town nestled among the oil wells and wheat fields of the Kansas prairie and Japan’s House of Peers. Yet both sat together and ate the same lunch at the Tokyo Rotary club in the summer of 1928. Though most of the Augusta Rotarians were members of the local Chamber of Commerce and some members served as mayor and even in the Kansas legislature, they were hardly movers and shakers like their Japanese counterparts. Some of the time zones RI straddled were cultural rather than temporal. How long could RI manage to encompass the middle class world of small town Kansas with the urban elites of Japanese industry?<sup>297</sup>

This relative class difference spoke volumes as well about the fundamental contradictions behind Rotary’s “Sixth Object.” The Tokyo club met for most of the 1920s in the very prestigious Bankers’ Club. Given the high status of Yoneyama and

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<sup>295</sup> *Augusta Rotary Club Since 1918*, n.p., “Notes on the Beginning.” This is not actually true, as a few clubs in Michigan and Illinois of that size were receiving charters as early as 1915 – 16. But the Augusta club was, in fact, one of the smallest of clubs in all of Rotary when established in 1918 and for several years thereafter.

<sup>296</sup> District Governor’s Report, 30 September 1929, Augusta Club Historical File, RI Archives.

<sup>297</sup> *Augusta Rotary Club Since 1918*, n.p.; *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part II, pp. 269 – 310, for detailed coverage of the Tokyo club’s hosting of the Second Rotary Pacific Conference, Oct 1 – 4, 1928 and the highest levels of members and visitors involved.

other club members in Japanese banking, this was never questioned. Augusta, on the other hand, had hardly any hotels to accommodate the gatherings, resulting in club meals being served by local “ladies’ organizations.” Though the Tokyo Rotarians leaned heavily on their wives and daughters to make a success of their hosting the Second Rotary Pacific Conference in Tokyo in early October 1928, they did not count on their spouses to provide the club’s meals as in Augusta. Rather than serving the food at the club meetings, the Japanese wives and daughters served as the embodiment of Japanese culture and dignity at important social events outside the club. At the Third Rotary Pacific Conference in Sydney in March 1930, in fact, the wives of all the gathered Rotarians made such an impact that Tokyo’s club president, Tahara,

hoped that, in the future, Rotarians would all take their wives along with them when they visit foreign countries. They will then be received more warmly by Rotarians everywhere. It is impossible to enter into intimate and friendly relations without the help of our Rotary Anns.<sup>298</sup>

Clear differences in how a given Rotary club used its time and where it ate its meals belied the classless ideal of RI’s “perfect democracy.” But it was in the appearance and comportment of their wives that the true test of dignity and social class took place.<sup>299</sup>

Yoneyama was right in his assessment in 1928. His fellow Rotarians in towns like Augusta, Kansas, were hardly living and breathing in anything like the regal, cosmopolitan airs of the Bankers’ Club. Whereas the first major club project for Tokyo Rotarians centered on rebuilding practically the entire city in the wake of the 1923 earthquake with significant international aid, for example, the Augusta Rotarians’ first

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<sup>298</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part III, 25 – 26.

<sup>299</sup> The cities of Kingston, Jamaica and Port-au-Prince, Haiti waited almost forty years to get their own clubs precisely because such “intimate and friendly relations” threatened racial hierarchies and race-based codes of interaction within the United States. See chapter 1, “No Foreigners Allowed.”

significant project was their small contribution to the Fourth Liberty Loan drive of southern Butler county in the summer of 1918. Years later, in a club report from 1931 which asked how the Augusta club's "international service committee" was faring and whether the club was promoting RI's "Sixth Object" within the community, the response was unadorned: "We have made but little use of it. Our community is practically 100% white American so that our problem is one of education regarding other peoples." What was meant exactly by "other peoples" was unclear, except to say not white and very far away – at least in mind.<sup>300</sup> One must wonder how the club would have received a visit from a fellow Rotarian from Japan. Would it have been anything remotely like Horikoshi's experience in Chicago and New York City? The Augusta club was not even attempting to correspond with Rotarians in other countries, which most other clubs managed to do even in the heart of the Depression and the height of economic nationalism. Instead, the club's passion during the interwar years generally revolved around helping the Boy Scouts of America and the 4-H clubs.<sup>301</sup> One could easily write off Augusta, Kansas as the perfect counterpoint to the cosmopolitanism of the Tokyo Rotarians.

And yet there was Jesse Fisher with his two nephews citing RI's "Sixth Object" in the middle of the Bankers' Club of Tokyo. His presence, in fact, was not a complete anomaly. Augusta got its very own club thanks to ten Rotarians from Wichita, Kansas. Among those ten were Giff Booth, Sr., Will Price, and Marcellus Murdock – three members of Harry Stanley's committee responsible for publishing "The Five Ships and

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<sup>300</sup> Info from Kansas 1925 census on breakdown of the town and county.

<sup>301</sup> *Augusta Rotary Club Since 1918*, n.p.

Cargoes.”<sup>302</sup> The extension of Rotary into a satellite town of Wichita seemed a logical step in 1918 because Augusta lacked any “commercial organization” and so the club sought to do “a considerable amount of commercial and civic work together with boys work.”<sup>303</sup> Also, Wichita Rotarians like Murdock and Booth saw it as their duty to bring their nearby business counterparts and community leaders into the fold, no matter how small and provincial the town. Though Jesse Fisher’s devotion to RI’s vision of a “world fellowship of businessmen and professionals” may have stood out in the Augusta club, there were many in Wichita who were in accord with him. For both the Wichita and Tokyo Rotarians, there was often a fine line between their boosterism for the sake of their city’s and nation’s economic expansion and their business and cultural internationalism for the sake of world peace and cooperation.

### **Empire and Boosterism – Tokyo Style**

A sense of arrival pervades the Tokyo club’s activities and speeches throughout the 1920s as the Japanese clubs grew in reputation worldwide – and the Japanese Empire itself continued its expansion. Members of the Chinese Rotary clubs, however, began complaining by the early 1930s that the Japanese Rotarians were using their clubs in Manchuria and their control of the seventieth district as a vehicle for expansion of the Japanese Empire into all of East Asia and the “South Seas.”<sup>304</sup> They had good reason for concern.

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<sup>302</sup> See Chapter 1, “Flights of Fancy.”

<sup>303</sup> *Augusta Rotary Club Since 1918*, n.p.

<sup>304</sup> For example, see Chesley Perry to E.F. Harris, Shanghai Club President, 22 April 1933, Shanghai Club historical file, Vol. VI, where the Shanghai Rotarians had heard of a Japanese representative who managed “to slip in some resolution condemning boycott” to protest Japanese military aggression in Manchuria after the Mukden Incident of September 18, 1931. The Rotary

When Suzuma Suzuki (“Linen Goods – Mfg.”) spoke on his visit in Mukden and Dairen in August 1929, he recounted the eagerness of fellow Japanese businessmen of those cities to establish their own Rotary clubs because, he explained to his Tokyo club:

Manchuria is considered by the world as the richest treasure house, and all nations are making investigation concerning it. The key to the hidden treasure is now held by our brother Rotarians in Dairen and Mukden, and they are anxiously waiting to show us the secret, so that we may all come back millionaires. This is the best and probably the only opportunity we shall have for grabbing the treasure which all nations are looking for!<sup>305</sup>

For Suzuki, time was of the essence. The future Rotarians of Manchuria could prove an invaluable resource for the expansion of Japanese economic interests in those key cities, so Suzuki formed the “on-to-Dairen-and-Mukden committee” that week as a way to drum up support for a joint business trip to those cities by Tokyo Rotarians. When the Dairen-Mukden Charter Night came to pass in early October 1929, seventy-two Rotarians and spouses from Tokyo arrived in the Dairen harbor and were greeted by “Rotary flags streaming upon the roof of the pier, and many members with ladies waiting to welcome us.”<sup>306</sup> At the celebration dinner itself, “the dining room was tastefully decorated with the flags of many nations and that of Rotary International. Vice-president Ohdaira [of the new Dairen Rotary club]...spoke of the phenomenal growth Rotary is making throughout the world” while the club’s other vice-president Furusawa told of “how the club had been

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club of Shanghai had sent a letter to RI’s Board of Directors entitled “Report of efforts of Rotary club of Shanghai, China, in connection with the Sino-Japanese Conflict at Shanghai,” wherein the club registered its collective concern about Japanese military expansion. The board and RI’s president, Sydney Pascall of England, concluded that the letter reflected “the Rotarian approach to a difficult and delicate problem and it reflects great honor on the members of the Shanghai club who undertook this piece of work....” But, in the end, there was no formal discussion nor any decision imparted by RI’s Board. See chapter 5, “the Manchurian candidate,” on this point as well.

<sup>305</sup> *History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part II, 28 August 1929, 458.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 475.

originally conceived and brought into existence through the kindness of Tom Sutton.”<sup>307</sup> Since Tom Sutton, RI’s international president in 1928 – 29, had given active support to the idea of establishing clubs in these cities while presiding over the Second Pacific Rotary Conference hosted by Tokyo in the fall of 1928, the boosterism of Suzuki, Ohdaira, and Furusawa carried the imprimatur of RI’s highest officials.

Yet, despite the veneer of Rotarian neutrality, it was an all-Japanese affair. The next day the entire group of Tokyo and Dairen Rotarians and spouses went to Port Arthur to be “shown the old battle ground” (where the Japanese destroyers shot the opening salvos of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 with a surprise attack on the Russian fleet stationed there) while Ohdaira, representing the South Manchuria Railway Co., hosted a dinner “with all sorts of Japanese dishes at different tables,” followed by “a Chinese play.”<sup>308</sup> Many of the guest Rotarians then continued on to visit Mukden “by way of a visit to the Iron Foundry in Anshan,” where the newly hatched Mukden Rotarians “at a signal from the Chairman, stood up and, forming a circle about the hall with flags and pennants in hand, ‘ringed’ around the seated guests singing Rotary songs in Japanese.”

By their arrival in Harbin, “the future commercial centre of the Far East,” it was becoming evident how little space there was between these Japanese Rotarians’ visions of trade expansion and the growing imperial ambitions of the Japanese Empire in Manchuria.<sup>309</sup> So much so that Governor General Saito in Seoul invited the visiting Rotarians to tea at his official residence on 10 October 1929: “Through his courtesy we were allowed to see the Korean Palace and hear the old classical Korean court music.

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 476 – 478.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 478.

Governor General Saito is well informed of the Rotary principles. He made a careful study of it, and wishing to have a club organized in Seoul, he invited the leading businessmen of the city and laid the matter before them for consideration, and soon afterward it was organized.”<sup>310</sup> Nor was Saito alone in seeing the usefulness of Rotary as a form of cultural diplomacy on Japan’s behalf, as Acting Consul General Kishi in Sydney wrote to Vice-Minister Yoshida of the Department of Foreign Affairs that same week “requesting that steps be taken to have the Rotary club of Tokyo send a very large delegation including many Rotary-Anns [RI’s informal term for spouses of Rotarians since 1914] to the Third Pacific Conference [of RI]” to be held in Sydney in March 1930.<sup>311</sup> In other words, the circuits of contact and influence emanating from the Tokyo Rotary club followed and strengthened the sinews of an emerging Asian/Pacific power.

Manchuria, however, was not the only land brimming with economic potential in the eyes of Japanese Rotarians. The following week, Rotarian Masaharu Sakamoto (“Stock Raising”) took a similar view as he looked southward. He reported on his recent trip to the “South Sea Islands,” specifically the plantation in Sumatra of “our fellow member Sohma, and received special attention from the officers of the company.” Showing great admiration for European style colonialism, he described how “he was greatly impressed by the business-like management of the Dutch Colony. The agricultural and mining output is said to be nearly two billion guilders a year, out of which nearly 500,000,000 guilders go to Holland.” Sakamoto was convinced that “the South Sea Islands will be one of the richest spots on the face of the earth 10 or 15 years

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., p. 480.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

hence.”<sup>312</sup> With Tokyo’s Mayor Horikiri becoming a full member that same meeting, the private service club continued down the path of blurring lines between the state and the industrial base in Japan at all levels.<sup>313</sup> Mayor Ariyoshi of Yokohama seemed to have it right: the syncretism of Japanese nationalism and Rotary’s principles of “business morality” was rather tenable. Only, the admixture seemed much less neutral in practice than in theory. Apart from RI’s gentlemanly request that the Tokyo Rotarians remain apolitical, there were no logical or institutional guarantees that the lofty ideals of RI’s civic internationalism could not become the handmaiden to Japanese imperialism.

When reconfigured by Tokyo Rotarians, RI’s vision of civic uplift and harmony of interests could serve the purposes of Japanese corporations and the Japanese Empire as it could the expansion of U.S. interests both public and private. The civic internationalism of RI had its uses for the Japanese Empire as the nation underwent transition from the Taishō Democracy (1912 – 1925) to an increasingly unstable parliamentary system (1925 – 1932) to the unchecked militarism, fierce nationalism, and outright racism of a military state and the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere (1932 – 1945). As their “fellow Rotarians” of China and East Asia were to discover, RI’s civic internationalism, like Japanese industry in general, literally could be a two-edged sword.

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 4 September 1929, 459 – 60.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 463. Attempts at maintaining an “apolitical” atmosphere in the club became increasingly absurd before the emergence of a military state in 1932. For instance, when the Tokyo club asked Masanori Ito (classification “News Service Bureau”) to speak on the Naval Conference going on in London, he was told to do so “without touching on the political side of the problem, for in Rotary we refrain from discussing political questions.” Ito wondered if it was possible to do so without exploring the complex political negotiations, so he spoke instead on “a strange type of ship coming into existence within two or three years.... They never thought of such a thing...until the conference, a cruiser of 9,000 tons, with a deck at the stern, for 15 airplanes.” Ito was describing the first aircraft carriers. *History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part III, 9 July 1930, p. 139. After the Mukden Incident in particular in September 1931, the Japanese Rotary clubs began to align their weekly songs, speeches, activities, and publications more and more with the expectations of the Japanese military governments.



## Conclusion

In mid-June, 1940, Rotarian Takashi Komatsu took the stage before 3,700 + Rotarians and their guests as one of the featured speakers in an “international round table” at RI’s annual international convention – in Havana, Cuba. Mr. Komatsu, Managing Director of the Asano Shipbuilding Company and a member of the Tokyo Rotary club since 1929, was a close friend and protégé of Umekichi Yoneyama. Also, as a high school student who lived in “an American home” and subsequently graduated from Monmouth College, a Scottish Presbyterian frontier college surrounded by Illinois cornfields, Mr. Komatsu knew both America’s heartland and the business world of Tokyo very well.<sup>314</sup> But, with warfare breaking out in both Europe and East Asia, this was a delicate time for Rotary to hold a roundtable on international peace and understanding. And Komatsu knew it. Though there was a net gain of 99 new clubs for RI in the previous year, over 75 clubs had been terminated as a result of political change, conflict, and conquest, most of them being in Spain or Czechoslovakia that particular year. Clubs in Germany, for example, had already been banished by the German government years earlier.

The Rotary clubs in Japan, however, were still – somehow – going strong in the summer of 1940. In fact, Mr. Komatsu explained that their old district within RI had grown so much that they had formed three new separate districts, with 19 clubs in northeastern “Japan proper,” 19 in the southwestern Japan, and 8 clubs in Chosen (Korea) and Manchukuo (Manchuria). Moreover, the Japanese Rotarians had formed their own

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<sup>314</sup> George L. Treadwell, club secretary for Chicago Rotary club, to George Fitch, Chinese YMCA, 17 March 1932; File: [“Other Clubs – Shanghai: 1926 – 34”]: 10 – 5]; Chicago One Archives; Chicago, Illinois.

“Advisory Committee” for all those clubs – much as the Canadians and Europeans had done years before – and expected soon to have over 100 clubs organized within those three districts.<sup>315</sup>

Komatsu exuded confidence and good will as he described the “spirit of fellowship” among the 500 Rotarians and families at his club’s latest conference in Yokohama a month prior, the 30 to 40 “overseas Rotarians” that visit his club each week in Tokyo, and the student exchanges run by the club with their counterparts in the United States. Komatsu invited the Rotarians in the Havana audience, about two-thirds from the U.S. and Canada and about one-third from Cuba and Latin America, to visit the Tokyo club in a folksy and heartfelt way:

When you reach our meeting place you will be welcomed by the members of our fellowship committee, and you will wonder whether you are really so many thousand miles away from home. Perhaps the only sense of strangeness will come to you when you notice that the people about you are talking in an unintelligible tongue. But in this you need have no anxiety, because you will soon be surrounded by many friends who will be able to speak to you in one of the languages familiar to you.<sup>316</sup>

There would not be any demands or expectations that the visitors speak Japanese, he further assured them. Indeed, the Tokyo club’s meetings always began with the singing of their national anthem and “a Rotary song,” much like in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. Though the Japanese were not known for their “community singing,” he explained that “under the leadership of one of the American members [i.e., “Ed” Berton], we learned to sing some of the simpler songs in English.” The club, in fact, had developed many of its own club songs in Japanese since Berton’s departure on the day of Jesse Fisher’s visit back in July 1928. But the service club stood for something more

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<sup>315</sup> *Convention Proceedings of the Thirty-First Annual International Convention of Rotary International*; Havana, Cuba; June 1940, 118 – 122.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid*, 121.

than lunchtime sociability and businessmen's camaraderie. Komatsu then reviewed the origins of the Tokyo orphanage and children's home started by his club:

At the time of the great earthquake of 1923, the Rotarians of the world showered upon us their deepest sympathy in the contributions which they sent. I am sure there must have been generous gifts from many of you present here today. You will be interested to know that a Rotary home was erected with this money, and our members have assumed the responsibility of maintaining and perpetuating it. In this home the young women who are brought up at the orphanage, before they are sent out to take their places in life, are given courses in domestic science, arts and crafts, and in cultural training such as flower arrangement, tea ceremony, music, painting, and so forth.<sup>317</sup>

The orphaned girls of Tokyo had a place to go, a roof over their head, and a way to become proper Japanese women thanks to the Tokyo Rotarians. The Tokyo club had found its own unique way of blending patriotism and philanthropy under RI's umbrella of international fellowship and good will. Their philanthropic credentials established, Komatsu then announced that the Japanese clubs were expanding into Manchukuo – not Manchuria.

But the global tensions of 1940 could not be erased so easily by the sunny disposition of Komatsu. That took some explaining. Komatsu spoke after Rotarian Gardiner of Ceylon, who described himself as a “full-blooded Tamil” and then proudly explained how his name was a product of Portuguese traders and American missionaries, and just before Rotarian Jorge Fidel Durón of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, who drew much applause for his comments on “American ideals of liberty and democracy” and how America – both North and South – was “the continent of the future.”<sup>318</sup> Komatsu therefore knew he was expected to provide his own insights into the meaning and

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid, 117 – 119, and 122 – 123, respectively.

direction of international relations in the near future. “Surely we are living today in a troubled world,” he began,

but let us not be dismayed by the darkness of the hour, nor forget our responsibilities as Rotarians.... Let us avoid any action which might be interpreted as casting stones of blame. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the peoples of the world do not possess the same psychological approach to the problems of life. The nations are still far apart in their understanding of human needs and interests in their ideals and aspirations, and even in their conceptions of right and justice.<sup>319</sup>

Komatsu had done his best to assert the same claims to Japanese autonomy within RI that so many other Japanese Rotarians had done before. But, despite the applause, RI’s Board of Directors and conventioners knew some position had to be taken on the outbreak of warfare in both Europe and East Asia. By convention’s end, Resolution 40-15, “Rotary and World Conflict,” was adopted: “In these catastrophic times,... Rotary is based on the ideal of service, and where freedom, justice, truth, sanctity of the pledged word and respect for human rights do not exist, Rotary cannot live nor its ideal prevail.”<sup>320</sup> In the face of war, RI began to link the core concept of civic internationalism – “service above self” – to an incipient language of universal human rights. It was anyone’s guess what would happen to RI’s service ideology – as an apolitical, private approach to community service – during and after a period of global, industrialized war.

Exactly three months after Takashi Komatsu’s artful evasions in Havana, the Tokyo Rotary club voted to disband, along with all other 45 clubs that fell under Japan’s “Advisory Committee.” The dream of over 100 Rotary clubs within the Japanese Empire

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 420 – 421. Serious environmental issues were also under consideration: Resolution 40-14, proposed by Rotarians of Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, called for the “restoration and conservation of soils, waters, forests, and related resources of the various nations” because “the conservation of these natural resources constitutes a problem of vital importance.” *Convention Proceedings*; Havana, Cuba; p. 420.

within a year had quickly passed into memory as the U.S. government began to enforce its oil embargo on the Japanese Empire. The last club meeting opened first with Rotarian Nagasaki's distribution of his pamphlet "on the petroleum in the Dutch-Indies, and the Industrial Alliance in Germany."

The final order of business then came to the floor: the formal disbanding of the Tokyo club, only months shy of its twentieth anniversary. Confusion and regret hung over the final meeting's conversations and debates since the exact reason for the elimination of the clubs was not clear. Described as "a desperate situation" and "a painful experience," the club members voted unanimously to vote for disbanding in deference to their officers' advice. Only Umekichi Yoneyama's speech could provide any sense of closure as he

in distressing mood sadly dragged himself to the speakers' stand and said, 'In twenty years of Rotary this is the first time I have had to speak before you with such painful feelings.... I simply wish to express my heartfelt humble apology for not being able to save our club from such a fatal condition. However, we did not and could not sit idly looking on with folded arms at the changing current of the time.

He then suggested the reorganization of the Japanese Rotary clubs as "a new association based upon national unit administration" with clubs calling themselves by the day of the week on which they met. Yoneyama stipulated only that "It is absolutely necessary to maintain the international spirit even in the new organization. Without the ideal of service, its application to our business and community lives would be meaningless." To the bitter end, Yoneyama wished to remain true to RI's "Sixth Object" and its creed of civic internationalism. "Kitty" Kitashima wrote down the final words of the club's end: "It is the earnest hope of all the members of the Tokyo Rotary Club that the time may come soon when we can peacefully join again in world fellowship for the advancement of

the Rotary principles.” The Tokyo Rotary club thus severed official ties with RI in September 1940, renamed itself the Wednesday Club, and continued meeting faithfully through the war, apparently even through the destruction of large parts of Tokyo in the firebombings of March 1945. Though Yoneyama survived the war, he never lived to see his beloved Japanese Rotary clubs reinstated. He died in April 1946. In the conflagration of 1923, the Tokyo club found its *raison d'être*; and in that of 1945, its demise.<sup>321</sup>

Or did it?

While returning from administrative duties in India in the fall of 1948, George Means stopped off in Japan to inform the *de facto* proconsul of the U.S., General MacArthur, of his plans to re-establish the extensive network of pre-war Rotary clubs of Japan. MacArthur told Means, later to become the third General Secretary of RI (1953 – 1972) and a critical figure in RI’s postwar national and international expansion, that “Washington” would have to authorize his request. Means did not welcome this kind of intrusion into the doings of a private non-governmental organization. “Rotary cannot operate if it must be subject to the authority of governments.”<sup>322</sup> To RI’s officers and approximately 250,000 members worldwide, such oversight would have been especially galling since over forty Rotary clubs had spread throughout Japan from 1920 until 1940 with no direction or help from the U.S. or Japanese government. Also, General MacArthur was well aware of Rotary’s extensive presence in East Asia since one of his own top aides during the war, Carlos Romulo, had been a high ranking international

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<sup>321</sup> *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club*, Part V, 265 – 273.

<sup>322</sup> “Reintroduction of Rotary into Japan and Korea: Report of Assistant Secretary George R. Means,” 9 in Box 149, File: [Special Service Support Committee], RI Archives. See also George R. Means, Gen. Sec, Rotary International (1953 – 72), “Rotary’s Return to Japan,” 27 in Box 144, File: [Extension – General, 1969 – 75], RI Archives.

officer and very active Rotarian from Manila in the 1930s.<sup>323</sup> Furthermore, MacArthur was already an honorary member of the Rotary clubs of Milwaukee, Melbourne, and Manila.<sup>324</sup>

George Means soon got his “permission” without any formal approval from Washington. He then found the ideal translator for the task at hand – Mr. Takashi Komatsu. Komatsu was now speaking in places very different from the Centro Asturiano in Havana, and undoubtedly using terms like “international peace” and “world fellowship” from a different perspective. With help from Komatsu and because the clubs had continued through the war as “day-of-the-week” clubs, the re-organization of the Rotary clubs throughout Japan went forward with little difficulty. When the Tokyo club was formally reinstated into Rotary International in March 1949, one of the Tokyo club’s first honorary members was General MacArthur, who explained that Rotary was “sorely needed in this time of so much world unrest.” Eventually, thirty-three other clubs also emerged from the rubble by 1950 – 51, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As Means explained it, Rotary International was “the first non-religious international organization readmitted to Japan after the war.”<sup>325</sup> RI’s civic internationalism had a definite role to play in the postwar era.

Because General MacArthur could grasp the import of RI’s success in Japan from personal experience, however, he was able to harness it for his and his government’s own ends. While re-establishing the Japanese Rotary clubs, George Means “had an

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<sup>323</sup> Carlos Romulo was heavily involved with the Manila Rotary club throughout the 1930s, playing host to the Pacific Rotary Conference held there in 1935 and becoming RI’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President in 1937 – 38.

<sup>324</sup> David Shelley Nicholl. *The Golden Wheel: The Story of Rotary 1905 to the Present* (Plymouth, UK: MacDonald and Evans, 1984), 377, 426 – 429; David C. Forward. *A Century of Service: The Story of Rotary International* (Evanston, IL: Rotary International, 2003), 209.

<sup>325</sup> Means, “Rotary’s Return to Japan,” 27 – 28; Nicholl, *The Golden Wheel*, 428.

opportunity to tell General MacArthur of the progress being made,” but emphasized that he “did not report to him, and neither did [he] ask for his approval.”<sup>326</sup> But that was a question of formality. RI’s civic internationalism, under postwar U.S. military occupation of Japan, served far different ends than ever imagined by Yoneyama and his fellow Japanese and American Rotarians from the interwar period.

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<sup>326</sup> Means, “Rotary’s Return to Japan,” 28 – 29.



## Appendix A: Charter Membership of the Tokyo Rotary Club, 1921

| <b>Tokyo Rotary Club</b>    | <b>Charter Members:</b>      |                 |                            |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Name                        | RI Classification            | Title           | Company                    |
| <b>Yoneyama, Umekichi</b>   | <b>Commercial Banking</b>    | <b>Director</b> | <b>Mitsui Bank</b>         |
| Fukai, Eigo                 | Central Banking              | Director        | The Bank of Japan          |
| <b>Fujino, Masatoshi</b>    | <b>Flax Manufacturing</b>    | <b>Director</b> | <b>Nippon Flax Co.</b>     |
| Fukushima, Kisoji<br>"Bill" | Wool importing               | Asst. Mgr.      | Mitsui Bussan              |
| Fujita, Yuzuru              | Life Insurance               | Director        | Meiji Life Insurance       |
| Fujiwara, Toshio            | Auto Dealing                 | Director        | Naigai Kogyo Kaisha        |
| Horikoshi, Zenjuro          | Silk Exporting               | Senior Partner  | Horikoshi & Co.            |
| Hoshi, Hajime               | Drug Manufacturing           | President       | Hoshi Seiyaku Co.          |
| Inouye, Keijiro             | Hydro Electric Power         | Director        | Kinugawa Hydro-Elect.      |
| Isomura, Toyotaro           | Coal Mining                  | Director        | Hokkaido Colliery Co.      |
| Ito, Yonejiro               | Shipping Service             | Vice Pres.      | N.Y.K.                     |
| Iwai, Jutaro                | Trust Business               | President       | Nikko Security Co.         |
| Kabayama, Aisuke            | Steel Manufacturing          | Director        | Nippon Steel Co.           |
| Kajiwara, Chuji             | Exchange Banking             | President       | Yokohama Specie Bank       |
| Kishi, Keijiro              | Electric Machinery           | Director        | Shibaura Engineering       |
| <b>Kitashima, Watari</b>    | <b>Stocks – Dealing</b>      | <b>Partner</b>  | <b>Kitashima &amp; Co.</b> |
| Kurachi, Masao              | Department Store             | Director        | Mitsukoshi Dept. Store     |
| Makita, Tamaki              | Mining Engineering           | Director        | Mitsui Mining Co.          |
| Nagano, Uheiji              | Architecture                 | Proprietor      | Architect                  |
| Ono, Eijiro                 | Industrial Banking           | VP              | Industrial Bank            |
| Sano, Zensaku               | Education – University       | President       | Univ. of Commerce          |
| <b>Shimizu, Teikichi</b>    | <b>Building Construction</b> | <b>Partner</b>  | <b>Shimizu-Gumi</b>        |
| Tsushima, Kennosuke         | Newspaper Publishing         | Director        | Tokyo Nichi Nichi          |
| Wada, Toyoji                | Cotton Spinning              | President       | Fuji Gassed Spinning       |
| <b>Asabuki, Tsunekichi</b>  | <b>Life Insurance</b>        |                 |                            |
| <b>Miyaoka, Tsunejiro</b>   | <b>Law Practice</b>          | <b>Lawyer</b>   | <b>Proprietor</b>          |
| <b>Sohma, Hanji</b>         | <b>Hon. Veteran Member</b>   |                 |                            |
| Tahara, Yutaka              | Paper Manufacturing          | President       | Mitsubishi Paper Mill      |
| Mikami, Yoshinaga           | Tropical Plantation          | President       | Kainan Sangyo Kaisha       |
| Imamura, Shigezo            | Private Banking              |                 |                            |
| Masuda, Giichi              | Magazine-Publishing          |                 |                            |
| Isono, Chozo                | Grocery-Distributing         |                 |                            |
| <b>Tokyo Rotary Club</b>    | <b>New Members in 1922</b>   |                 |                            |
| Yamagishi, Kakutaro         | Shoe – Mfg.                  |                 |                            |
| <b>Akaboshi, Rikuji</b>     | <b>Real Estate</b>           |                 |                            |
| <b>Yamamoto, Kyuzaburo</b>  | <b>Theater</b>               |                 |                            |
| Berton, Edmund D.           | Steel                        |                 | U.S. Steel                 |

|                              |                              |                   |                               |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ichinomiya, Reitaro          | Exchange Banking             |                   |                               |
| Reifsnider, C. H.            | Education – College          | President         | Rikkyo College                |
| Tsuchiya, Motosaku           | Journalist                   |                   | Kogyo no Nihon                |
| Kajiwara, Chuji              | Banking                      | President         | Hypothe Bank                  |
| Yamaguchi, Shozo             | Hotel Service                | Director          | Imperial Hotel                |
| Kimura, Tokuei               | Physician                    |                   | Izumibashi Hosp.              |
| Isaka, Takashi               | Fire Insurance               | Man. Dir.         | Yokohama Fire Ins.            |
| Yamaguchi, Kisaburo          | Incandescent Lamp            | Director          | Tokyo Elect. Co.              |
| Kawai, Ryosei                | Stock Exchange               | Director          | Tokyo Stock Exchange          |
| Yamada, Sanjiro              | Glass Manufacturing          | Director          | Asahi Glass Co.               |
| <b>Nanjo, Kaneo</b>          | <b>Machinery Dist.</b>       | <b>Director</b>   | <b>Mitsui Bussan Co.</b>      |
|                              |                              |                   |                               |
| <b>Tokyo Rotary Club</b>     | <b>New Members in 1923</b>   |                   |                               |
| Okochi, Masatoshi            | Chemical Industry            | President         | Chem. Science Research        |
| <b>Sugimura, Kotaro</b>      | <b>Jouranlist</b>            | <b>Director</b>   | <b>Asahi Shiimbun</b>         |
| Sugiura, Sozaburo            | Gas Service                  | Director          | Tokyo Gas Co.                 |
| Imaoka, Junichiro            | Ship Building                | President         | Uraga Dock Co.                |
| Inouye, Keijiro              | Hydro-Electric               |                   |                               |
| <b>Matsui, Shigeru</b>       | <b>Police Administration</b> | <b>President</b>  | <b>Police Training School</b> |
| Doy, Shusaku                 | Hat Making                   | Man. Dir.         | Tokyo Hat Co.                 |
| <b>Chiwaki, Morinosuke</b>   | <b>Dentistry</b>             | <b>President</b>  | <b>Tokyo Dental School</b>    |
| Ohta, Masataka               | Journalist                   | Vice Pres.        | The Hochi Shimbun             |
| <b>Uchimura, Tatsujiro</b>   | <b>Patent Law</b>            | <b>Proprietor</b> | <b>Tokyo Patent Bureau</b>    |
| <b>Okura, Kunihiko</b>       | <b>Spiritual Culture</b>     |                   |                               |
| Kimura, Heiyemon             | Furniture – Mfg.             |                   |                               |
| <b>Kinoshita, Seichu</b>     | <b>Physician/Obstetrics</b>  | <b>Proprietor</b> | <b>Kinoshita Hospital</b>     |
| <b>Mizushima, Shunichiro</b> | <b>Automobile Service</b>    | <b>Proprietor</b> | <b>Mizushima Co.</b>          |
| Tanaka, Jiro                 | Petroleum Producing          | Director          | Nippon Petroleum Co.          |
| Struther, John               | Agricultural Chemistry       |                   |                               |

Source: *The History of the Tokyo Rotary Club* (Tokyo Rotary Club: Tokyo, 1940), Vol. I, 4 – 5, 18 – 19 and Vol. V, “List of Members Arranged in Order of Their Admittance,” 1 – 3. (Members in bold were still members in good standing in September 1940, when the Tokyo Rotary club formally disbanded and became “the Wednesday club” during the war.)

## **Chapter 4: “Under the Shadow of Rotary”: Friendship and Disillusion in Cuba**

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Cuba cannot forget the part which you Americans had in her history, and so as yesterday we went forward together to obtain our liberties, today we join our shoulders and unite our hearts to fight for the liberty of the world.

Carlos Alzugaray, President of the Rotary Club of Havana, 1917.<sup>327</sup>

Why not talk about the Fourth of July instead of devoting himself to the abuse of Cuba?

Jose Borrell, Chair, International Relations Committee, Rotary Club of Havana, 1948.<sup>328</sup>

### **Introduction**

In June 1940, over 3,700 members of Rotary International and their guests descended on Havana for their thirty-first annual international convention. Over 2,700 businessmen and professionals from all over the United States comprised the majority of the conventioners. But RI had a particular interest in the non-U.S. Rotarians and guests in attendance – especially the 900 from Latin America and the Caribbean, including about 800 from Cuba alone. Their presence testified to RI’s creed of international cooperation and inclusiveness, its civic internationalism. Given the limited attendance from outside the Americas due to the onset of war in both Europe and East Asia, RI’s 1940 international convention in Havana also had the aura of a great meeting of the

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<sup>327</sup> *Convention Proceedings, Eighth Annual International Convention Proceedings*; Atlanta, Georgia; 17 June 1917.

<sup>328</sup> Jose Borrell, Chairman of International Relations Committee, Havana Rotary Club, to Philip Lovejoy, General Secretary of RI, 17 September 1948. Havana Club Historical File, Vol. 2, RI Archives.

Americas, as a unique opportunity for the organization and its members to proclaim their commitment to improving pan-American relations.<sup>329</sup>

Cuba's Secretary of State greeted the Rotarians in Spanish and then read a speech by Cuba's president, Federico Laredo Brú, that captured the spirit of the convention:

How extraordinarily timely is this meeting of thousands of persons from such distant places of this world, all having the same thought in mind and the same purpose of working more and better for the benefit of humanity and of *our* civilization. [italics added]

The possessive adjective, "nuestra" ("our") called for some elaboration.

Cuba ... making, as you Rotarians do, friendship the standard of our international relations with other countries ... in this uncertain time ... feels itself to be most closely joined to the nations of this continent and tightens its fraternal bonds of friendship and understanding even more and principally with the great nation which, in such a brilliant, effective and disinterested manner, ....put an end ... to the false legend of expansion and imperialism, thus acting, when we declared our independence and sovereignty, in a manner very different from other nations....<sup>330</sup>

Soon to be replaced by Cuba's *de facto* leader, Colonel Fulgencio Batista, President Brú envisioned a shared civilization among the Americas premised on friendship as the "standard of our international relations." The term "nuestra"/"our" transcended the political borders of the Americas by pointing to a higher plane of shared republican values embodied foremost by the one exceptional nation to the north, the United States of America.

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<sup>329</sup> The composition of RI's official Havana Convention Committee – chaired by Fernando Carbajal of Lima, Peru – reflected this point: Richard Wells of Pocatello, Idaho; Ernesto Santos Bastos of Lisbon, Portugal; Charles Reeve Vanneman of Albany, New York; Julio Zetina of Mexico City, Mexico; and Joaquin Serratos Cibils of Montevideo, Uruguay. Carbajal, an engineer who worked in Panama (where he first came in contact with Rotary), and Cibils later became presidents of Rotary International (in 1942 – 43 and 1953 – 54, respectively). See Ricardo Mariategui Oliva, *Historia del Rotary Club de Lima, 1920 – 1955* (Lima, Peru: El Rotary Club de Lima, 1956), 10.

<sup>330</sup> *Convention Proceedings, Thirty-First Annual Rotary Convention*; Havana, Cuba; June 9 – 13, 1940; 15. Speeches given in languages other than English appear in English translation immediately afterward in RI's convention proceedings, as was the case here.

Mixing notions of progress and pan-Americanism, President Brú linked the highest aspirations of the republic of Cuba with the ideals of the visiting Rotarians and their guests. He then proclaimed the “fraternal bonds of friendship and understanding” between Cuba and the U.S. as counter-evidence to the “false legend of expansion and imperialism” by the United States. Brú echoed the sentiments behind President Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy, but also paid homage to the United States as the progenitor and protector of the republic of Cuba. Speakers from Canada, Great Britain, the U.S., Finland, Palestine, Ceylon, Honduras, Nicaragua, and even Japan reiterated President Brú’s call for unity and international friendship four days later at the last plenary session of the convention – the “International Roundtable.”<sup>331</sup>

President Brú’s address reaffirmed the words of another U.S. President as well. In his war message to the U.S. Congress in 1898, President McKinley lumped together “the cause of humanity,” “our duty” to Cuba as a neighbor and struggling republic, protection of U.S. life and property in Cuba, and the prevention of “serious injury to the commerce, trade, and business of our people” as reasons for war with Spain. The “destruction” of the U.S.S. Maine then capped off the list. Just as trade and warfare were twinned in U.S. political discourse at the birth of the Cuban republic, so were U.S. expansion into Cuba and the denial of that encroachment: “I speak not of forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression.”<sup>332</sup> Congress enshrined McKinley’s renunciation of territorial conquest in the Teller Amendment the following week. With its anti-colonialism intact, the U.S. government sent its troops into

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<sup>331</sup> *Convention Proceedings*, Havana, Cuba; June 1940; 81 – 159.

<sup>332</sup> President McKinley’s War Message, 11 April 1898. U.S., Department of State, *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs* (Washington, D.C.), 1898, 750-760.

Cuba with the promise “to leave the government and control of the Island to its people.”<sup>333</sup>

Within a few years, the Platt Amendment made its appearance first as a rider to a U.S. Army appropriations bill, then as a part of the Cuban constitution in 1901, as a condition of U.S. military withdrawal in 1902, and finally within the Permanent Treaty between the U.S. and Cuba in 1903. In effect, Cuba surrendered its ability to conduct foreign policy on its own so that “the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence.”<sup>334</sup> Over time, the Platt Amendment became the focal point of Cuban resentment toward the expanding presence of the United States in Cuba. Its abrogation in 1934, however, did not prove the gateway to Cuban independence and full sovereignty.<sup>335</sup>

The history of Rotary clubs in Cuba during the interwar period provides important insight into how U.S. hegemony deepened over time in Cuba and how the contradictions of the Teller and Platt Amendments played out among Cuban businessmen and their U.S. counterparts. The Havana club represented Rotary’s first uncertain steps outside of the Anglophone business world, thus revealing the exotic-peer in the first stages of its social construction. Moreover, approaching the Havana club itself as a “microsite of rule” by the United States exposes how the imagined “bonds of friendship” between U.S. and Cuban Rotarians operated more like the “intimacies of empire” rather than a

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<sup>333</sup> “Resolution for Recognition of the Independence of Cuba, 20 April 1898,” in Michael D. Gambone, ed., *Documents of American Diplomacy: From the American Revolution to the Present* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 121 – 122.

<sup>334</sup> “Platt Amendment,” 22 May 1903, in Gambone, ed., *Documents of American Diplomacy*, 130 – 131.

<sup>335</sup> For two authoritative texts on this period, see Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment, 1902 – 1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986) and idem., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

counterfactual to the “false legend of expansion and imperialism.”<sup>336</sup> In this capacity, RI’s activities and influence in Cuba serve as a case study in U.S. cultural and economic imperialism in one nation over several decades. The real impact of RI’s civic internationalism was its power to operate in both directions, blinding Rotarians both in Cuba and the United States to the subtle and pervasive nature of U.S. economic and political control. The origins and evolution of the Havana Rotary club during the interwar period, in short, illustrate in detail the nature of U.S.-Cuban relations under the shadow of the Platt Amendment.

### **From “the Latin Races” to Fellow Rotarians**

That a Rotary club took root in Havana as early as 1916 should not be a complete surprise. As Louis Pérez demonstrates in abundant detail, Cuba came to define itself in total opposition to Spain and all things Spanish by 1898. Instead, Cuba looked north to the United States: “Much in the Cuban sense of future and of place in that future was shaped by or otherwise derived from the encounter with the North.”<sup>337</sup> This deepening sense of a modernity gap between the newfound republic of Cuba and the established republic of the United States powered the central dynamic in the two nations’ relations for more than half a century:

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<sup>336</sup> This chapter takes up a parallel approach to Stoler’s: “...that the power and authority wielded by macropolities are not lodged in abstract institutions but in their management of meanings, their construction of social categories, and their microsites of rule.” See Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” *The Journal of American History*, 88: 3 (December 2001), 52. See also Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

<sup>337</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 6.

The success of U.S. hegemony in Cuba [became] less a function of political control and military domination than a cultural condition in which meaning and purpose were derived from North American normative systems. U.S. influence expanded from within, usually in non-coercive forms, just as often introduced by Cubans themselves as by North Americans. U.S. culture spread rapidly across the island and emerged as one of the most accessible means by which to aspire to well-being and thus was a powerful motivator in the acceptance of new social norms and new cognitive categories. This was the principal way that Cubans entered the postcolonial order, the circumstances under which social institutions were formed and moral hierarchies established, the means by which many citizens arranged the terms of their familiarity with the world at large.<sup>338</sup>

The United States permeated Cuba's national identity, economic systems, cultural patterns, and everyday social interactions to an unprecedented degree.

Given the Cubans' unusual openness to developments in U.S. political, consumer, and business culture, the establishment of a Rotary club in Havana should have been an easy task. By 1915 Havana already had its own chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the YMCA, the Boy Scouts, the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge as well as various fraternal associations and other U.S.-based social organizations.<sup>339</sup> Also, Rotary had already merged its service ideology of civic uplift, community development, and progressive business practices to its business internationalism when the National Association of Rotary Clubs voted to change its name to the International Association at its second annual convention in Duluth, Minnesota in 1912 in recognition of the new

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<sup>338</sup> Pérez, Jr., *On Becoming Cuban*, 10 - 11.

<sup>339</sup> Pérez, Jr. *On Becoming Cuban*, 396 – 397. See also Carmen Diana Deere, “Here Come the Yankees! The Rise and Decline of United States Colonies in Cuba, 1898 – 1930,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (November 1998), 729 – 765, for a helpful review of why U.S. colonists were going to Cuba at this time, their distribution throughout Cuba, their connection with the annexationist project, and their attempts at americanization while there. This chapter, however, does not and should not treat the Rotary clubs throughout Cuba as a type of “U.S. colony.” Rather, the clubs served as a kind of institutional borderlands that functioned distinctly from the U.S. colonies Deere investigates.



clubs in Canada, Ireland, and Great Britain.<sup>340</sup> That convention went even further by crystallizing its commitment to international expansion in its constitution with a simple, new objective: “To encourage and promote the organization of Rotary clubs *in all commercial centers of the world.*”<sup>341</sup>

In spite of this proclamation, many remained reluctant to expand “Rotarianism” beyond the Anglo-Saxon world. For example, Chesley Perry, the General Secretary of the International Association of Rotary Clubs (I.A.R.C.), had strong misgivings about opening a Rotary club in a city like Havana, where he had served as a soldier during the U.S. occupation after 1898:

I know the city pretty well and also have talked with men who are in business there and we have had visitors who have undertaken to start a club there. It is still a Latin-American city and neither are conditions of thought among the Latin-Americans right for the starting of a Rotary club nor is Rotary itself sufficiently well developed to be translated into Spanish and conducted among the Latin races.<sup>342</sup>

Yet Perry’s reticence stood in contrast with the views of regional members who advocated on behalf of expansion into Cuba. Ernest Berger, a Rotarian from Tampa and executive for the Tampa-Cuba Cigar Company, had a different perspective: “I discussed the matter both with American, Cuban and Spanish business men, and feel convinced that a Club consisting of men from these various races will be a big success. It would never do to confine it to Americans alone.” John Shelby, a piano manufacturer from Birmingham, Alabama and the District Governor for all Rotary clubs in the Southeastern

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<sup>340</sup> When the first sixteen clubs in the U.S. first came together in 1910 in Chicago, they formed The National Association of Rotary Clubs, which lasted only two years before becoming the International Association of Rotary Clubs (I.A.R.C.) from 1912 to 1922 and then Rotary International (RI) from 1922 until the present.

<sup>341</sup> “The history of the ‘Object of Rotary’,” index files, RI Archives. [Italics added]

<sup>342</sup> Chesley R. Perry to John Shelby; 22 April 1914; Historical Club Files, Havana, Cuba, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

United States in 1914-15, concurred: “after discussing this matter with the Tampa and Jacksonville Clubs I am thoroughly convinced that this will mean a great deal for Rotary, and the boys in that part of the country are very anxious to take hold of this matter at once.” The growing acceptance of Rotary as an international organization, fueled in particular by regional and international business interests, eventually overrode the cultural and racial stereotypes behind Perry’s his initial misgivings.<sup>343</sup> In the organization’s internal debates over expansion into Cuba, business interests eventually trumped racial identities.

Perry’s ultimate conversion was crucial to this international expansion. As the General Secretary, he had more input into the planning, direction, and growth of Rotary clubs than anyone else from 1910 until his retirement in 1942. Without his blessing, the push for “this missionary work of establishing Rotary clubs in other cities” would have been all but impossible.<sup>344</sup> As late as August 1914, Rotary’s highest leadership was divided between those who expected a natural progression from British Rotary clubs into Paris and Berlin, and those such as Arch Klumph (soon to become president of the I.A.R.C. in 1916) who were actively pushing for extension into Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and eventually all of Latin America.

The turning point for both Perry and Rotary’s leadership came at the international convention in San Francisco in 1915, held during San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific Exposition. Calling the Expo “a remarkable opportunity for us,” Rotary’s Board of Directors spent the week meeting with “the representative men from South America . . . at the exhibits of their respective republics.” Within months, Allen D. Albert, president of

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<sup>343</sup> Ernest Berger to Chesley R. Perry, 9 May 1914, Havana Vol. 1., RI Archives; John Shelby to Chesley R. Perry, 22 March 1915, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>344</sup> Chesley R. Perry to Rafael Martinez Ybor, 15 April 1915, Havana Vol. 1., RI Archives.

the I.A.R.C. in 1914 - 15, appointed a special committee on “extension work in non-English speaking countries and particularly in Latin America.” Perry himself came fully on board after his meetings both at the Expo and with John Barrett, Director General of the Pan-American Union from 1906 to 1920 and chairman of Rotary’s Foreign Extension Committee from 1918 to 1920. Given the war in Europe and a growing chorus of “businessmen familiar with South America” calling for “the cooperation of the natives of the various countries [rather] than letting Americans be the organizers,” Rotary’s extension into Latin America went forward with the active participation of Latin American businessmen.<sup>345</sup> As in Rotary’s internal debates over a potential Havana club, pre-existing transnational business networks obviated certain racial hierarchies. To this end, Perry sought the help of Rafael Martinez Ybor, the Cuban Consul in Tampa, who had extensive business ties in both Havana and Tampa. The case that Perry made to Ybor is revealing:

In San Antonio, they say the ‘The Rotary Club is the warmest thing that has struck the business world in many years.’ .... It is a revelation of the meaning and the application of the Golden Rule.... The existence of a Rotary club benefits the community, improves the business world in general and helps to carry forward the human race in its upward march.<sup>346</sup>

Not only did Perry attempt to deflect criticism of Rotary’s embrace of the profitability of social networking among businessmen, but he also explained the “missionary work” of Rotary outside the United States in terms quasi-religious in tone, but secular in application. Just as Rotary needed to deploy a discourse of professionalism and civic

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<sup>345</sup> Board of Directors of I.A.R.C., Minutes of Meetings, Extension Committee 1912 – 1929: 1 August 1914, “Extension Europe Africa/Asia Minor,” 18 July 1915, “Extension in South America,” and 4 – 5 Sept 1915, “Extension Central and South America.” On the biography of John Barrett, see Salvatore Prisco, John Barrett, *Progressive Era Diplomat: A Study of a Commercial Expansionist, 1887 – 1920* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1973).

<sup>346</sup> Perry to Martinez Ybor, 15 April 1915, Havana Vol. 1; RI Archives.

responsibility to prove that it was something more than a mere luncheon club of backscratchers and boosters; so, too, did the “extension” of Rotary clubs outside the United States require something more than “just business” as an explanation. It was not enough to speak of regional and cross-border business interests between Cuba and the U.S. as the sole impetus for the transplanting of Rotary clubs into Cuba. RI’s civic internationalism provided a cultural framework of meaning and purpose as it expanded in the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>347</sup> When Rotary’s membership of business and professional men applied that framework on an international scale, they envisioned a global network populated with exotic but professional and reliable peers in “all commercial centers throughout the world.”

Identifying and incorporating these exotic-peers outside the English-speaking world into the fold, however, proved more difficult in practice than in theory. When Chesley Perry wrote Alexander Kent, attorney and representative of the Red Feather Cinematograph Company in Havana, to give him authority to form the club in 1915, he made one important stipulation:

You are also advised and directed to make up the Rotary Club of Havana with not more than 25 percent of American and not less than 75 percent of Cubans or Spanish-Cubans. What we want to do is to spread Rotary among the native people of other countries more than among our American brethren who happen to be in other countries.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> As Rotary was entering Cuba and Hawaii in 1915, it already had clubs throughout the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. By 1923, there were clubs in Puerto Rico, Wales, the Philippines, Uruguay, Argentina, China, India, Panama, Australia, France, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, New Foundland, Norway, Peru, South Africa, Brazil, Denmark, the Netherlands, and even the Channel Islands. By 1930, for example, there were 3,349 clubs in 66 countries, and by 1940, 5,066 clubs in 85 countries. For a complete list of club expansion year by year, see “First Rotary Countries” and club membership statistics, RI Archives and *Rotary: Fifty Years of Service* for maps showing the first Rotary clubs of each country in the world.

<sup>348</sup> Chesley R. Perry to Alexander Kent; 7 July 1915; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

But as the year wore on, Kent was slow in organizing the club and Perry grew impatient: “We are desirous of having a club started in Havana so that following Havana we may be able to introduce Rotary into all of the Latin American countries and thereby intensify the present cordial international relations between all the Americas.”<sup>349</sup> At the headquarters of Rotary in Chicago, the founding of Havana’s Rotary club was part of a grander strategy. Kent, however, did not share such hopes:

I think that you had better address yourself to someone else in Havana to organize the local club. The conditions set forth by you are, to my mind, very difficult if not impossible . . . I have never yet seen oil and water mix properly, and I don’t believe that Cubans and Spaniards will ever of their own free will join a fraternal organization with Americans. That has already been attempted in Havana and without any success.<sup>350</sup>

For Alexander Kent, “Latin American cordiality does not exist except on paper.”<sup>351</sup> Kent was no believer in the transformative powers of Rotary’s civic internationalism.

Undaunted, Perry found his answer – in the Rotary club of Tampa, Florida. To John Turner, one of three Tampa Rotarians recruited to organize the Havana club and dubbed the first chairman of the “Committee on Extension of Rotary in Latin America,”

Perry made clear his goals:

The only instructions which I know of to give you are that it has been agreed that in the establishment of Rotary clubs in other countries, the effort should be made to have such clubs formed of representative citizens of the respective countries rather than of Americans or Britons temporarily resident of those countries.<sup>352</sup>

Perry’s secretariat in Chicago was now spearheading the project as he gathered the names and addresses of all Cuban consuls in the U.S. and sent form letters to all U.S. Rotary clubs that opened with “My dear (club president), owing to the fact that we are now

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<sup>349</sup> Perry to Kent; 20 November 1915; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

<sup>350</sup> Kent to Perry; 25 November 1915; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Perry to John Turner; 1 February 1916; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

making a direct move upon Havana, Cuba through the courtesy of Turner and the Rotarians of Tampa . . .” and asked the presidents to invite the consuls to Rotary meetings and ask them to assert their influence in Havana on Rotary’s behalf. The plan met with some success, particularly when the son of Cuba’s Secretary of State attended the Baltimore club’s meeting and came away impressed.<sup>353</sup> The synopsis of the club president in Baltimore revealed the complex overlap of the commercial, diplomatic, and social dimensions of Rotary’s designs on Havana: “I found Mr. Desvernine a very high class gentleman, and further learned that he is the son of the Secretary of State of the Republic of Cuba. This no doubt will give us prestige in Havana and trust that the Tampa Rotary Club who has fathered the establishing of a Club in Havana will be successful.” But what did it mean to have “prestige” in Havana and for the Tampa club to “father” the Havana Club?

For Perry and the leadership of the I.A.R.C., it soon became clear that pre-existing regional business ties anchored in Tampa and Havana were the primary drivers in their “move upon Havana.” The turning point came when the Jacksonville and Tampa Rotary clubs took the initiative in February 1916. Helping Turner organize the Havana club were A.L. Cuesta of “Cuesta, Rey & Co., Manufacturers of Habana Cigars,” and Ernest

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<sup>353</sup> Frank Waterman, Vice-President of the New York Rotary Club, to Perry, 15 December 1915, where Waterman first suggested the idea of inviting each Cuban consul in the U.S. to attend a local Rotary Club meeting and see if any consuls come away willing to help set up the club in Havana. Waterman attached the complete list of Cuban consuls and Perry sent out form letters to each Rotary Club’s president explaining Rotary’s goal of setting up a new club in Havana (Perry to club presidents, 4 February 1916). Waterman’s real goal was to open a Rotary Club in Buenos Aires, where he had specific business interests, but saw the Havana club’s establishment as a necessary step in that ultimate goal. See also, John B. Berger, President of Baltimore Rotary Club, to Perry, 20 March 1916; Perry to Berger, n.d.; E. Casaus, Consul de Cuba in Galveston, Texas to Frank Allen, President of Galveston Rotary club, 14 February 1916. All letters found in Havana, Vol. 1.; RI Archives.

Berger, “Secretary Treasurer for the Tampa-Cuba Cigar Co.”<sup>354</sup> When Turner and Cuesta teamed up for a visit to Havana in early February, they met with success. In the end, regional business interests and the blurring of business trips with “missionary work” proved far more effective channels of influence and motivation than all the planning and oversight by Rotary’s secretariat in Chicago and diplomatic overtures to Cuba’s representatives in the United States. Turner and Cuesta had decided “to form the Club of the old conservative Spanish and Cuban element” believing that “when formed I feel sure it will be a credit to our association.”<sup>355</sup> “Prestige,” it turned out, had a specific meaning.

By April 1916, the Havana Rotary club held its first official meeting and signed up its charter members. Turner was especially proud of the club’s first president: “Rene Berndes is also secretary of the Country Club, treasurer of the Yacht Club, and is prominent socially as well as commercially, speaks fluently Spanish, English, and German, is a native Cuban.”<sup>356</sup> Cuesta and Turner recruited many more “joiners” from the Havana social and business world. The Havana club’s first vice-president, L. E. Brownson, was director of Banco Nacional de Cuba, a partner of Purdy and Henderson (the largest contractor in Cuba), director of the American Club, and a member of the Country Club. Albert Hoffman, the club secretary, was manager of the foreign department of National City Bank of New York City (New York City’s Rotary club also helped in organizing Havana’s club and National City Bank with many other clubs as well) while the position of club treasurer fell to C. W. Ricker, Assistant Manager of the Havana Electric Co. Turner also noted Manuel A. Suarez, a senator from the Havana

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<sup>354</sup> Based on letterheads from Berger to Perry, 10 March 1916 and Cuesta to Perry, 16 June 1916, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>355</sup> Turner to Perry, 10 February 1916, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>356</sup> Turner to Perry, “Report of club established”, April 1916, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

Province and tobacco planter, and Angel del Valle, representative of the “Castañeda interests in leaf tobacco ... among the largest and best of the islands” as important Cuban charter members.<sup>357</sup> The class status of the first Havana Rotarians was the highest possible: a pattern later followed in most of the non-anglophone cities where Rotary clubs formed over the interwar period. RI’s civic internationalism thrived on such borrowed status.

Of the original twenty-two charter members, ten had Spanish surnames and twelve Anglo surnames. Apparently Perry’s 25 percent cap on U.S. membership was not hard and fast. Moreover, not one charter member had direct ties with the sugar industry, by far the predominant industry in Cuba, while nearly half the new Havana Rotarians worked for or represented U.S. companies in Cuba. Strong representation from Cuba’s own tobacco industry reflected the business ties within that industry and their U.S. sponsors in Tampa and provided some counterbalance to U.S. predominance. For Perry and the I.A.R.C., however, it was close enough.

Secretary Perry, it turned out, had his own reasons for rushing to organize the Havana Rotary club before the summer of 1916. Rotary’s seventh annual convention in Cincinnati was to serve as a showcase for the expansion of Rotary clubs outside the Anglophone world. Turner’s success came just in time. Rotary’s dignified reach would now encompass 27,000 members among 200 + U.S. Rotary clubs augmented by thirteen Canadian, thirteen British, two Irish, one Scottish, and now one Cuban club. Havana’s club president, Rene Berndes, was to attend the convention, radiating his native Cuban identity and flashing his cosmopolitanism in any one of his four native languages. But at the last moment, business obligations prevented Berndes from being able to travel.

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<sup>357</sup> *ibid.*



“Bert” Hoffman, club secretary and manager of the West Indian Branch of National City, made the trip instead. Asked to speak as representative of the Havana club to the convention audience of 3,800, Hoffman was first greeted by the cheer “Viva Habana!” The admittedly shy speaker then announced that the “Club Rotario de la Habana” had grown in only three months from 16 charter members to 53 members, had expected to offer Cuba’s business-friendly President Menocal honorary membership (evoking applause), and had planned “to make Spanish the language of the club,” adding that “they want to make it distinctly Cuban.” Hoffman then lent his own support for “Cubanizing” the club, apologized for not being an actual Cuban himself, and then closed with what turned out to be the club’s most important concern: Would the International Association consider holding its 1920 annual convention in Havana? Boosterism knew no bounds. Instead of an answer, he was given the official flag of Rotary to take back to Havana for weekly display in their luncheon meetings.<sup>358</sup> The certification of Havana in the world of Rotary’s businessmen and professionals had begun through the Havana club’s proxy, Albert Hoffman, officer for National City Bank.<sup>359</sup> What would a “distinctly Cuban” Rotary club entail?

Though Turner’s expectations for the new club had its limits, the Cuban Rotarians were characteristically determined to outperform their U.S. colleagues in their own dedication to progressive uplift and community service. Reporting to the Cincinnati

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<sup>358</sup> Rotary International; *1916 Convention Proceedings; Cincinnati, Ohio*; July 16 – 20, 1916; 133 – 34.

<sup>359</sup> The certification could be read on two levels: Rotary’s formal approval of the first of many Cuban Rotary clubs and part of the creation of an international network of businessmen and professionals closely associated with and working for transnational corporations. Regarding the emergence of such a network of transnational elites after World War II and especially after 1960, see William I. Robinson, “Towards a Global Ruling Class? Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class,” *Science and Society*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Spring 2000).

convention as head of Rotary's "extension" into Latin America, Turner voiced a common view of the Havana club's potential:

The work of introducing Rotary in Latin-America is most important, in that the Latins, as a rule, have not imbibed the 'get-to-gether' spirit, and the Rotary idealism, while there, has never been appealed to or brought out to any extent. This is caused by the business men being self-satisfied with their own businesses and not reaching out and getting on the broader plane that Rotary expects.<sup>360</sup>

Cuban businessmen lacked the public-spiritedness, civic-mindedness, and professionalism in their private endeavors "that Rotary expects," thus revealing their need for tutelage in the ways of civic cooperation and responsible citizenship.

Yet the Cuban Rotarians, well aware of these expectations, showed a great desire and capacity to counteract them through their club activities. Living in the shadow of their perceived modernity gap, the Cubans felt they had much to prove and so wasted no time. By late summer 1916, the club had already taken on three projects: 1) A study on how to develop tourism in Cuba, 2) Improvement of Havana's "means of communication" through formation of a "commission of engineers and citizens" to study the issue (headed by Mariano Diaz and Dr. Carlos Alzugaray), and 3) Improvement of traffic flow through better streets, greater legal enforcement, and education/advertising campaigns on better driving.<sup>361</sup> By the following year, the club's agenda swelled with ambition under the label "Platform for the beautification of the city of Havana," which included:

- 1) Buying land to give to the city "suitable for parks and other public uses ... as playgrounds, gymnasium, and bathing places."
- 2) More traffic improvement by laying out "a complete system of boulevards and avenues" as well as the paving of old roads.

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<sup>360</sup> Rotary International, *1916 Convention Proceedings*, p. 89.

<sup>361</sup> Hoffman to Perry, August 1916, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

- 3) “To procure the removal of all wires, posts, and obstructions from the streets, sidewalks and entrances.”
- 4) “To bring about the installation of a more artistic and efficient system of street lamps and electric lights in the matter of public lighting.”
- 5) “To make prominent study of the city’s internal development and to recommend to Congress the most advantageous plan for securing it.”
- 6) “To study and improve the system of hygienic houses ... for laborers and persons of small means....”
- 7) The introduction of one-way traffic on key avenues and the prohibition of traffic on narrow streets for the sake of pedestrian traffic.<sup>362</sup>

Most remarkable about the Havana Rotary Club’s agenda for the city was how unremarkable it was in light of parallel trends in the U.S. during the same period. The Havana Rotarians were legitimate business progressives just as much as their counterparts in North America and Great Britain. The club’s eagerness to have concrete results in time for its report to Rotary’s upcoming international convention in Atlanta in June 1917, however, was unique. As always, the perceived modernity gap between upstart Cuba and the colossus to the North hung over the Cubans. And they sought to close it as fast as they could by engaging in and demonstrating their own particular mastery of Rotary’s vision of civic internationalism. As the first exotic-peers in Rotary’s “world fellowship of business and professional men,” they knew they had much to prove.

### **Neutrality and the Flagging of Cuban Nationalism**

Despite claiming to be just a private, voluntary association of businessmen, the Rotary club often played a distinct public role, especially in public ceremonies. Rotary clubs the world over have always sponsored an array of public ceremonies in the name of the public interest and which the public may attend. The Havana Rotary club was no

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<sup>362</sup> Havana Club’s flyer; n.d., but very probably June 1917; “plataforma por el embellecimiento de la Ciudad de la Habana,” led by Dr. Carlos Alzugaray, club president; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

different. As the first Rotary club in Latin America, however, the club saw itself as having a special role in all its ceremonies both public and private. The club took its identity as the flagship for Latin America and as Havana's bridge to a transnational network of business and professional peers very seriously – and creatively.

In order to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of “El Grito de Yara,” the beginning of Cuba's war for independence from Spain on October 10, 1868, the club organized a parade in Havana “with the idea of presenting a flag to the National University.” The Rotary club of Havana saw it as a natural duty to organize “the largest and greatest parade ever had in this country” in order to “raise the patriotic spirit of the people, which in later years has been greatly demoralized.” The club was intensely proud at succeeding “in getting representatives from all the social classes to parade with us.”<sup>363</sup> Rotary's civic internationalism thrived on such local pride of place.

The Havana club's public commemoration of El Grito de Yara, however, had many precedents in the United States. One of the most significant public events in Rotary's early history came soon after the entrance of the U.S. into the Great War. The first major gathering of Rotarians after President Wilson's declaration of war on Germany in April was its eighth annual international convention in Atlanta from June 17 – 21, 1917. Attending the conference as representatives of Havana and all of Cuba were

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<sup>363</sup> Mario MacBeath to Paul Harris, founder and first president of Rotary; 16 October 1918; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives. In fact, three years later, on 10 October 1921, the Rotary club orchestrated “a monster parade composed of social, civic, commercial, military and naval organizations followed by an open air mass meeting in one of the large parks of the city” which included a speech by Dr. Alfredo Zayas, Cuba's president. The purpose of the massive event was simple: “...to inspire in the masses that fuller sense of civic pride and patriotism and to propagate and bring out the finer quality of citizenship and public spirit so essential in a people when the need arises to combat, weather, and successfully overcome national ills.” The event occurred in the heart of Cuba's debt crisis of the early 1920s, but more on this later. Alberto Crusellas, Havana club president, to Chesley Perry, 17 October 1921, Havana Club File, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

Dr. Carlos Alzugaray, Avelino Perez, and L.S. Salmon. While the International Association saw the convention as a prime opportunity to demonstrate its patriotic support of the war against “the Hun,” the Atlanta Rotary club also wanted to use the convention to publicize its existence and purpose to the rest of Atlanta and the South in general. Both the international and the local found their interests neatly met through a very large public event centered on the national cause of winning the war in Europe. It was also the Havana Rotarians’ debut before their North American and British counterparts in business as well as “the first public recognition of Cuba as an ally by the people of the of the British Empire and the United States.”<sup>364</sup> The Atlanta convention had its uses for Cuban patriots.

The first day of the convention being a Sunday, the Atlanta Rotarians had the churches throughout the city focus on the general theme of “Service.” Indeed, many of the sermons were given by visiting Rotarians of the cloth. But the culmination of the opening ceremonies was not in the pulpits and pews of Atlanta. Instead, the Atlanta club orchestrated a massive patriotic rally and flag-raising in Piedmont Park attended by an estimated 15,000 persons. Amidst “patriotic concerts” and “stirring speeches,” the open air event

was kaleidoscopic: Rotarians mingled with the great crowd, the pink hats of the Chicagoans, the green hats of the Tulsans, the black and white umbrellas of the Kansas Cityans, the dark old rose of the Chattanoogaans, the red, white, and blue umbrellas of the Cincinnatians, the white ‘jack tar’ suits of the Savannahans, all vying with the brilliant colors of the summer costumes of the Atlanta ladies.<sup>365</sup>

It was a veritable orgy of boosterism and conventioning by Rotarians and rubbernecking by thousands of non-Rotarian Atlantans. But the call to patriotic duty and

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<sup>364</sup> *Eighth Annual International Convention Proceedings*, Atlanta 17 – 21 June 1917, 12.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

fervent nationalism in unity against the German menace imbued the festivities with palpable urgency. Despite the frivolity, everyone understood that it was a profoundly challenging moment in the nation's history. So the Atlanta club staged a massive flag-raising ceremony at Piedmont Park to capture the solemnity of the times:

A flag pole had been erected and streamers had been run to its peak setting against the rare blue of the afternoon sky the colors of all the nations – save one – now fighting for the liberty of the world. The one flag missing was that of the United States. Five trumpeters blew ‘Assembly.’ The famous Chicago band played ‘The Star Spangled Banner.’ Two marines of the United States raised aloft a little square of blue cloth. An American Indian of full blood, Chief Silvertongue, eagle feathers waving from his war bonnet, sang the first few words of the American anthem. The breeze unfolded the little square of blue into the Stars and Stripes. With a roar the thousands caught up the song – and the spirit of the 1917 convention had been fixed.<sup>366</sup>

The event may have been an effective way to meld God and country, but it was also great publicity for the Atlanta Rotary club and their Rotarian guests. Though Chief Silvertongue, “the Indian attorney from Kansas City,” began the national anthem with “his mighty tenor voice,” it was soon drowned out by thousands of Atlantans and thousands more visiting businessmen. Not all of those singing the anthem were from the United States.<sup>367</sup>

Atlanta's flag-raising ceremony had particular effect on one important Rotarian from Havana. As Dr. Alzugaray interpreted it: “At that convention the banner of service became the flag of country and all those Rotary clubs began to offer their most effective services by contributing to recruitment of troops, . . . conservation of food, and fundraising for the Red Cross, the YMCA, the United War Camp Community Service and similar organizations. . . .” Dr. Alzugaray was also impressed with nationwide efforts by the clubs

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> *The Rotarian*, Vol. XI, No. 1, July 1917, p. 12.

to construct zones near army camps for the “moral and physical preservation of the recruits” and efforts to obtain industrial experts for the war effort and other services that would help meet the needs of the U.S. government in its mobilization of the American Expeditionary Force.<sup>368</sup> Alzugaray saw his first contact with U.S. Rotarians in Atlanta as much more than an introduction to a luncheon club’s annual gathering. The massive flag ceremony galvanized public action in the war effort. More importantly, he expected to duplicate the feat in Havana, and thus unleash a similar flood of voluntarism, solidarity, and organization in service to the public good and Cuban patriotism. The Rotary club of Havana might just be the accelerant for republican virtues, national development, and economic cooperation that Cuba still lacked in its infancy as an independent nation. Amid the patriotic fervor of Atlanta in 1917, Alzugaray believed that the I.A.R.C. could mesh well with his own *Cubanidad*.

Grafting themes of Cuban nationalism onto Rotary’s civic internationalism soon became a common occurrence in the Havana club and then in all Cuban clubs that followed. In time, many other Cuban Rotarians could see what Alzugaray saw in Atlanta: the chance to inject their own nationalist aspirations into their Rotary clubs’ goals and activities. The most public events, therefore, became the best opportunities to visibilize their own nationalisms. The Cubans, in fact, were not alone in this trend. On the eighteenth anniversary of Rotary’s founding in Chicago, the Barcelona Rotary club presented the Havana club with the Spanish flag in a formal ceremony.<sup>369</sup> The following month, the Rotary club of Mexico City presented the Mexican flag to the Havana club with Mexico’s “Encargado de Negocios” in Cuba in attendance. All members were

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<sup>368</sup> “Speech by Dr. Carlos Alzugaray, president of the Havana Rotary Club, on the fifteenth anniversary of “Rotarismo.” February 1920. Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>369</sup> Photograph, 23 February 1923, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

strongly urged to attend as the Havana club planned on formally giving the Cuban flag in return to “a sister republic, so heroic, noble and generous – loved and respected by all” the following week in the name of “Rotarian brotherhood.” R. Gomez de Garay, a native Mexican and member of the Havana club, held the Mexican flag with honor for the ceremony’s photograph, an event later recounted in local newspapers as well as in RI’s own monthly magazine for worldwide consumption.<sup>370</sup>

The practice of exchanging national flags under the aegis of Rotarian “world fellowship” could serve many purposes and many interests. In January 1924, the Rotary club of Paris formally presented the French flag to the Havana club while a French army captain, a representative of the Commercial Attaché of France in Cuba, the French Minister to Cuba, the Attaché to the Ministry of France, and several other French and Cuban dignitaries looked on with approval. The Havana club president for that year, Emilio Gomez, warmly accepted the French banner and then put the ceremony in context for all those assembled:

Some time ago the Rotary Club of New York sent us that beautiful American flag that you are seeing, and it was quite natural that from there came such a good occurrence because it was in the United States of America where Rotary was originated. We, the Cubans, were pleased that it was the American flag first to join our national insignia. With similar pleasure we received the English, the Spanish, the Mexican flags sent by Rotary Clubs of those countries, all of them belonging to nations to which we are united by bonds of friendship and in some cases strong blood relationship.

It was for a long time since we were longing for that beautiful flag of that Universal Country to which we are united by bonds of affect. At last, today, our longing has been accomplished in receiving the heroic emblem

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<sup>370</sup> Gutierrez Lee to all Havana club members, copy sent to Perry, 13 March 1923; Perez to Perry, 18 March 1923; photo, 15 March 1923, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives. The original text in Spanish: “una Republica hermana, tan heroica, tan noble y tan generosa; por todos querida y por todos respetada” and “confraternidad rotariana.”



... and [it] will be united to our flag as it is already united in the bottom of our hearts.”<sup>371</sup>

This was a simple speech, but powerful in its symbolism. The order in which the Havana club received its flags reflected a re-imagining of the international order in the wake of World War I for the Cubans. Though Cuba’s international trade shifted its focus for good from Europe to the U.S. during the war, its cultural and intellectual compass had made the shift much earlier.<sup>372</sup> Now in a public ritual the two were placed in formal alignment.

But how much of this international order was really new? The Havana club’s flag ceremony left no doubt about the centrality of the U.S. to the Cuban republic’s identity, but it did not in any way challenge what Dipesh Chakrabarty would call “the hyperreal Europe.”<sup>373</sup> The Cuban Rotarians’ model nation-state – the United States – was still understood within the Enlightenment meta-narratives of progress, modernity, and capitalism. Gomez’s reference to France as “that Universal Country” highlighted this presumed continuity. However, the Cubans were attempting to reshape the old model of international relations. Although Gomez was not seeking to overthrow the normative configuration of western nation-states, he suggested that the interactions between those states should be determined by the “united bonds of friendship” that were manifest by the network of Rotary clubs in each country and city. The gift-giving of national flags among these clubs ostensibly occurred within a broader context of international peace and

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<sup>371</sup> Report by Club president Emilio Gomez to Rotary District Governor of Cuba, Juan Jose Hernandez, including press clippings from Havana press and two photos; January 1924; Havana Vol. 1; RI Archives.

<sup>372</sup> On Cuba’s economy transitioning from Europe to the U.S. in this period, see Perez, *Cuba: Between Reform & Revolution*, chs. 8 and 9. and on the complexity and scale of Cuba’s cultural and intellectual ties to the U.S. before WWI (as well as after the war), see Perez, Jr., *On Becoming Cuban*.

<sup>373</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 27 – 30.

stability engendered through friendship and “bonds of affect.” Friendship, cooperation, and sentiment had their currency in the worlds of diplomacy as well as international business.

In this way, Rotary International offered its Havana members a way of forging international ties among nations that both transcended and incorporated each nation. The service club’s presumed neutrality, particularly its discourse of civic cooperation for its own sake, could serve as a metaphysical glue for Cuban pride and patriotism. As with their parade in 1918 for the National University, Cuban Rotarians were just as likely to organize and sponsor public events celebrating key moments and personages of Cuban history as Latin American, North American, and European ones. For the Havana club members, the Rotarian vision of world peace and cooperation became the unseen, unacknowledged ideological backdrop of so many flag-draped luncheon podiums, hotel ballrooms, and diplomatic and civic ceremonies, thus pervading not only their Cuban identity but also mediating Cuban relations with all other nations. In doing so, they did more than place the United States at the top of a hierarchy of nations: they allowed the U.S. to define the terms of Cuba’s international relations, albeit because those terms promised local empowerment and needed reform. The Platt Amendment, in short, was not the only way for the United States to permeate, mediate, and constrain Cuba’s sovereignty.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> For a trenchant exploration of how the U.S. justified and explained the central contradiction of the Platt Amendment (limiting Cuban sovereignty in the name of helping Cuba), see Louis A. Pérez, Jr., “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (April 1999). He writes: “The U.S. narrative on 1898 provided the moral rationale by which to mediate the terms of Cuban independence and from which to reconfigure the meaning of independence around American interests. The defeat of Spain enabled the United States to subsume Cuban independence into the larger logic of U.S. national interests.” Pérez, *AHR*, 370 – 71. Just as Pérez identifies the

The Havana club's 1924 flag ceremony exemplified an expanding cultural practice of acting out Cuba's international identity according to stage directions established elsewhere. Plattism had its cultural dimensions, even in the world of international business. RI's civic internationalism performed, literally, the cultural work of U.S. economic imperialism

### **Disillusion Among the Cubans: The Political**

The Havana Club's reputation in Rotary International was sterling: an unusually serious and ardent club in its devotion to progressive reform. But the club's progressive agendas were not shared equally among its members. In 1920, Dr. Carlos Alzugaray, then head of the Asociación de Comerciantes de La Habana and eventual member of the Supreme Council of The Veterans' and Patriots' Movement in 1923 – 24, complained to Chesley Perry about the tendency of the "elemento americano" to leave the initiative for reform and community action to the Cuban members. Alzugaray's explanation of Cuban Rotarians' zeal for reform through their own club, especially when compared with non-Cuban Rotarians in Havana and in the U.S., revealed a critical faultline in the Cuban republic. In Alzugaray's view, the Havana club concerned itself with serious matters of reform and had little time for social "distractions" primarily because "we have many serious things going bad and that by necessity we must confront, that demand the

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narrative of 1898 and the "debt of gratitude" as the central driver in the justification of extending U.S. hegemony after the end of military occupation, so I am arguing for the ideological role of friendship, neutrality, and reform as further extensions of the theme of "gratitude." After all, the Teller Amendment – which declared the neutrality of the U.S. as a prerequisite to its going to war on Cuba's behalf against Spain – paved the way ideologically for the Platt Amendment.

attention of men who are concerned for their country.”<sup>375</sup> As a result, Alzugaray claimed that the Havana Rotary club was “today the institution, corporation or entity with the most prestige as a civic, patriotic, and altruistic.”<sup>376</sup> According to Alzugaray, nothing serious, noble or uplifting went on in Havana without the involvement of the “Club Rotario,” despite its critics. Even allowing room for exaggeration, Alzugaray’s description of the Cuban Rotarians’ role in Havana reform movements pointed to both the pressing needs for systemic reform within Cuba and the minimal means of effecting change through the political process. The service club from the United States, in Alzugaray’s view, was and ought to be an outlet for the simmering reformist impulse driving some of Havana’s key business and professional leaders.

Not everyone shared Alzugaray’s progressive vision for the Havana Rotary club. Cuban Rotarians were initially at odds over the degree of latitude suitable for club debates over politics and political reform. In a letter to Perry, Avelino Perez raised concern over how fellow club members discussed openly their disdain for abuses during the elections in 1918. He felt Rotary’s by-laws and constitution did not permit such open political debates in the club and he requested English copies of the constitution, by-laws, code of ethics, and club statutes in order to support his contention.<sup>377</sup> The problem, Perry wrote back, was hardly new for those at Rotary’s headquarters in Chicago: “I might tell you privately that the members of the Board feel that the Havana Rotary Club is fully competent to interpret sanely and wisely Article V of the Constitution of a Rotary Club,

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<sup>375</sup> Alzugaray to Perry, 14 April 1920, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives. Original quotation in Spanish: “tenemos muchas cosas serias que andan mal y que tienen necesariamente que preocuparnos y que exigir la atencion de los hombres que se interesen por su pais.” Translation by author.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.* Original Spanish: “hoy la institucion, corporacion, o entidad que, tiene mas prestigios como civica, patriotica y altruistica.” Translation by author.

<sup>377</sup> Avelino Perez to Chesley Perry, 15 November 1918, Havana Vol 1., RI Archives.

and without a personal understanding of the local political conditions it would be better for the rest of us not to undertake to make an interpretation.” He then admitted in a follow-up letter “that we are finding difficulty in drawing the line between what is real community service or patriotic interest in public affairs and what may be considered politics or partisan or personal politics.... It seems that it best can be solved by each club working it out according to local conditions and circumstances”<sup>378</sup> On the surface, the Cuban Rotarians seemed to have maximum freedom to work out their own terms and limits of debate for social and political reform within their own Rotary club. In the world of Rotary International, they were free to define what is political and act accordingly within their own community and country. There was plenty of Cuban autonomy in the moral universe of U.S. benevolence.

But the problem resurfaced within a year. Mario MacBeath, the Havana club’s young and vibrant club secretary, wrote Perry for advice on the same matter, but from a different position from Perez. MacBeath summarized Cuba’s struggle for political and social reform in the face of enduring obstacles. He reviewed the “local conditions and circumstances” for Perry:

It is recognized by everybody in Cuba that the men who have formed our different governments since we became independent have not been of a high moral or mental level. The moneyed interests, the merchants, the manufacturers, most of them foreigners, have kept away from politics, except in some few cases when they have joined hands with some politicians to defraud the people.

The better class of Cubans keep [sic] away from any contact with the government, even to the extent of not voting. The result of this lack of interest in the government on the part of our financial, commercial, and manufacturing interests on the one hand and the better class of Cubans on

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<sup>378</sup> Perry to Perez, 30 November 1918 and 23 December 1918, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

the other, has brought about a situation that prophesies serious consequences for Cuba.<sup>379</sup>

MacBeath was describing the profound division between the economic and political classes in Cuba, which resulted in a political system based on patronage and personal connections and a business community largely unconnected and unconcerned with bringing an end to ongoing graft and corruption let alone advancing real civic, economic, and political reforms.

The Rotarians of Havana, after the 1918 election, saw themselves caught between these two worlds.<sup>380</sup> As a service club premised on the activities of influential businessmen and professionals united for the purpose of community service and civic reform, the Rotary club's attempts at bridging the gap between the political and economic spheres in Cuba would seem natural. Many Havana Rotarians thus forged ahead, seeking solutions through their own reform agenda.

MacBeath was speaking on behalf of Havana Rotarians like Alzugaray who knew what they were up against and saw the inherent risks if no structural reforms were forthcoming. The problems went beyond immediate political housecleaning. To MacBeath, they were part of a broad moral and nationalist project:

Last November our elections were a disgrace to Cuba, and were they to be made along the same lines again, Cuba would see many black days. The Havana Rotary Club, right after the election, passed a resolution

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<sup>379</sup> MacBeath, Havana club secretary, to Perry; 14 August 1919; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

<sup>380</sup> For a thorough discussion of this period, see Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform & Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), second edition and Robert Whitney, *State and Revolution in Cuba: Mass Mobilization and Political Change, 1920 – 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Pérez points out: “Armed rebellion to protest re-election gave powerful expression to the urgency of politics in the republic. There was much at stake in these proceedings. Politics was serious business, at least serious enough to go to war for. If political means failed to dislodge incumbent authorities according to prescribed electoral methods, the nature of the stakes required the opposition to resort to military methods to restore parity of access to the distributive mechanisms of state.” Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 223 – 24.

condemning it and asking all Cubans, without regard to parties, to get together and insist on a change in the Electoral Law . . . .<sup>381</sup>

Even though all the members agreed that their Rotary club was not the place to take up overt political platforms, the need for real reforms was so compelling that they decided to take what action they could. In spite of the reluctance of members such as Avelino Perez, this resolution was supported by the majority of the club. It seems that for most of the Cuban Rotarians in Havana, the club was finally engaging in the mission for which it was created: pushing for and instigating genuine progressive and structural reforms in the Cuban political economy. Furthermore, this first attempt at promoting reform had a dramatic impact. An association was commissioned to draft a revised Electoral Law, and when its work was submitted to Cuba's legislature, it contained many of the Club's recommendations. It seemed logical to capitalize on this success in Havana by extending it to the growing number of Rotary clubs in the rest of Cuba:

Today Gonzalez del Valle . . . recommended that the Club adopt a resolution asking the other Rotary clubs of the Island to start a movement of education so as to obtain the producing classes (all those who earn an honest livelihood) to take an interest in politics and in the formation of political parties and their platforms.<sup>382</sup>

Gonzalez del Valle, in line with MacBeath and Alzugaray, envisioned an island-wide "movement of education" that would inculcate the "producing classes" in the ways of citizenship and civic cooperation through the emerging network of Cuban Rotary clubs. (By 1940, in fact, Cuba had forty Rotary clubs spread throughout the country organized as their own administrative "district" within Rotary International.)<sup>383</sup> The Cuban Rotarians had found their calling, their political voice for change.

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<sup>381</sup> MacBeath, Havana club secretary, to Perry; 14 August 1919; Havana, Vol. 1; RI Archives.

<sup>382</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> *Convention Proceedings*, Havana, Cuba; June 1940; "The Growth of Rotary," 353.

Or had they?

Debates still persisted on the possibilities of engendering reforms. The Cubans looked to the United States and its clubs for guidance. As MacBeath put it,

I remember that some time ago one of the Rotary Clubs in the States started a campaign to have all citizens vote on election day; another Club, a campaign to Americanize the people of their city, to have the foreigners become American citizens. So it seems to me that what Gonzalez del Valle wants the Club to do is not outside the province of Rotary Clubs. It all hinges on the interpretation of the word politics, as mentioned in Article 5 of the Constitution. Next week the matter will be put to a vote at the regular meeting, but it seems to me that it is a case to be decided by International headquarters.<sup>384</sup>

MacBeath was very careful not to divide the club “on this or any other question” and so turned to Secretary Perry in Chicago for advice in a “personal letter.” MacBeath, like his fellow Rotarians, showed great deference in trying to maintain the cordiality of the club’s atmosphere. But he also understood the matter would not and could not go away:

This will not be the last time that the Club will have to express an opinion on matters of this nature, and it is well that we have a definition of the term “politics” as used in the Constitution. Alzugaray, Gonzalez del Valle and myself believe that it is used in the narrower sense, that is politics in a party sense, not in the higher sense, that is as ‘the branch of civics that treats of the principles of civil government and the conduct of state affairs.’ What will you say?<sup>385</sup>

The question was how to move beyond the rigid structural limits on reform endemic to the Cuban republic under the shadow of the Platt Amendment and overwhelming U.S. capital interests. It was a question of how to move into politics “in the higher sense” and, in this case, effect meaningful electoral reform. Yet key Cuban citizens in Havana, economically empowered and driving toward overdue political reforms through their own, local Rotary club, ultimately chose to contain their reformist impulse within the

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.



limits of personal deference and the bonds of “friendship and understanding” with their U.S. peers. The Cuban Rotarians turned to RI’s headquarters for direction on how to manage the growing tensions in Havana and Cuba because they believed themselves to be a part of RI’s vision of advancing greater “understanding, good will, and international peace.” They were seeking to emulate what they saw as an institutional role model for coping with the civil, economic, and political difficulties in their own city and country.

That emulation had its price. Playing the Cuban counterpart to the U.S. Rotarian required the adoption of certain sensibilities, codes of behavior, and ways of seeing. Secretary Perry cabled back: “Party or partisan politics is politics forbidden and not unselfish betterment of public welfare.”<sup>386</sup> The distinction, for all its loftiness, could not have been more debilitating. Given the conditions of Havana and of Cuba, reform in such terms was no reform at all. In tune with the “elemento americano” in the Havana club, Perry’s advice would have placed too many limitations on the actions of Cuban Rotarians like MacBeath, Alzugaray, and Gonzalez del Valle.<sup>387</sup> After serving as the Havana club’s president and then the first District Governor for all the Cuban clubs in 1921 – 22, Dr. Carlos Alzugaray eventually resigned from the Havana Club’s Board of Directors in 1922 in order to devote all his time and energy to the “purification and moral regeneration of

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<sup>386</sup> Cablegram, Perry to MacBeath, 20 August 1919, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>387</sup> This result bears out Whitney’s characterization of “oligarchic capitalism” from this period: “The political activity of the Cuban elite was oriented more to negotiating the terms of American hegemony than to challenging it head-on.” Whitney, *State and Revolution in Cuba*, 21. However, it would not be fair to put MacBeath, Alzugaray, and Gonzalez del Valle and their followers in the Rotary club into the category of oligarchic capitalists if only because they saw a modern Cuban state as the key to successful reform rather than treated it as anathema. But the common thread was the unwillingness to challenge U.S. hegemony. See also Jorge Domínguez, “Seeking Permission to Build a Nation: Cuban Nationalism and the U.S. Response under the First Machado Presidency,” *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos*, 16, 1986, 33-48 and Louis A. Pérez, Jr. *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

the public agencies.”<sup>388</sup> For Alzugaray, the “fraternal bonds of friendship” among Rotarians were indeed tight – to the point of constraint.

As so often happened in Cuba in the shadow of the United States, an opportune moment for substantive reform by Cubans for Cubans dissipated – in this case, in the niceties of service club decorum. Initially, RI’s civic internationalism seemed a way to advance the interests of Cubans through the agency and empowering of homegrown leaders through joint civic action. However, when the Cuban Rotarians deferred to the interests of the U.S. leadership and conceived of “politics” and “reform” in terms approved and defined by the U.S. Rotarians, they had to abandon their push for much-needed electoral reforms. The marketplace, in theory, was prior to and indifferent toward politics. The precise reason for the Havana Rotarians’ acceptance into the international world of Rotary – their status as businessmen and professionals in the business world – prevented their having any voice outside of that world. In this way, the microcosm of friendly relations among U.S. and Cuban members of a “world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of service” recapitulated the rhetoric of reform amid the realities of imperial relations.

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<sup>388</sup> Letter of resignation to Havana Club’s Board of Directors, 2 May 1922, reprinted in “La Rueda del Rotary Club de La Habana,” 9 May 1922, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives. Original Spanish: “purificación y moralización de los organismos publicos.” Translation by author. A very similar pattern played out between Chesley Perry and Antonio Asensio, longtime club secretary at Cienfuegos. Asensio wrote of a “disconcerting indifference” on the part of many firms and potential members of Rotary in the city, and especially of his worries that so many potential classifications were “unfilled” as a result. It never occurred to Asensio nor Perry that the vacancies in the club were indicative of a very undiversified local economy. See especially Asensio to Perry, 24 September 1930, Cienfuegos Club File, Vol. 1., RI Archives.

## **Disillusion Among the Cubans: The Economic**

In the waning days of World War I, there was one area in which all Havana Rotarians were in agreement: finding ways to increase the economic strength and diversity of the Cuban economy. To that end, the Havana club published in 1918 a small pamphlet touting Cuba's economic potential in a burgeoning international marketplace. Its blend of boosterism and nationalism demonstrated just how well the Havana Rotarians had learned to speak the language of their counterparts in the United States. Opening with a glowing description of Cuba's location in the "channels of trade and the great markets of the world," the pamphlet emphasized Cuba's proximity to "the great American markets and centers of distribution" to the north; the "sister republics" of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile to the south; and Mexico and Central America to the west. But the vision of Cuba's role in international markets swept airily past any pan-American limits because "with the opening of the Panama Canal we have Japan, China, Siberia, and India; and to the east, across the Atlantic lies Europe." In short, there were no imagined limits to Cuba's economic growth in the minds of the Havana Rotarians of 1918.

Blessed with "more fine deep water harbors than any other country in the Western Hemisphere" and a population becoming more and more white European through immigration each year, Cuba also had a modern public education system thanks to "the American Intervention" in 1900 and a good transportation system of railroads and paved roads. Havana was the pinnacle of trade, since "more merchandise enters and leaves [Havana] . . . than any other port in the Western Hemisphere, with the exception of New York." Given the relative youth of Cuba as an independent republic, the pamphlet then summarized economic statistics from the prior two years to demonstrate its potential for

rapid expansion. The sudden increase in demand for so much of Cuba's products due to the war in Europe escaped mention as the obvious cause for its increase in "foreign commerce" of over 500 percent since 1902. Still, with their U.S. audience of fellow Rotarians clearly in mind, the pamphlet reduced it all to simple terms: "All but 15% of Cuba's exports go to the United States" while "90% of Cuba's imports come from the United States." The Cuban and U.S. economies were already closely interwoven. Therefore, the Havana Rotary club's mediation in U.S.-Cuban relations was crucial.<sup>389</sup>

There was one problem with the Havana Rotarians' vision of international trade. With well over three-quarters of Cuba's agriculture devoted to sugar production, the Havana Rotarians highlighted Cuba's capacity "to furnish the world with all the sugar it needs," and this "in spite of the fact that labor is much higher in Cuba than in other cane sugar producing countries." The quality of Cuba's sugar would always speak for itself. The pamphlet then closed with a review of all industries other than sugar. The next sizable industry was tobacco, at about one tenth the volume of the sugar industry. After tobacco, the industries diminished rapidly in scale and importance from fruits and hardwoods to cattle ranching and mining. Though Cuba's overall economic structure was heavily stilted toward the mass production, refining, and exportation of sugar to the U.S., that was clearly a temporary state of affairs, a function of Cuba's youthfulness as an independent republic and the unusual needs of wartime supply and demand. The Havana Rotarians looked to a future of economic diversification and growth:

A marvelous soil, a climate unexcelled, a location directly in the pathway of Western and Southern commerce, an ambition to excel in those things which make for good government, and a most liberal encouragement to outside capital, together with friendly international relations, presage for

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<sup>389</sup> "Cuba," Booklet published by the Club Rotario de la Habana, Havana, Cuba, 1918, no pagination. Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

this Republic most exceptional industrial development... and [with] but 25% of the available soil adapted to the production of sugar under cultivation, the possibilities of future growth along other lines than that now producing the greatest revenue are apparently marvelous. These opportunities are open to and challenge the capital and enterprise of the world.<sup>390</sup>

Their message well-honed and published in a glossy, colorful, and readable pamphlet for mass mailings and public consumption, the Havana Rotarians had only one task left: getting the word out to their intended audience – the 40,000 + Rotarians of the world, most of whom in 1918 were in their principal market of the United States.

It was not a difficult task in the end. Mario MacBeath knew that Chesley Perry was the one man at Chicago's headquarters who could make it happen for the Havana Rotarians. Their confidence in him paid off. Given MacBeath's regular correspondence with Perry, he and his fellow Cubans were already a very well known quantity in the halls of Rotary's administrative offices on Lake Michigan. Perry also drew from his own experiences in Cuba during the first U.S. military occupation and could attest that "many of the pictures in the pamphlet are not overdrawn." Perry then put his administrative machinery to work on behalf of Havana: "Without doubt there is a great deal of valuable information in this pamphlet which would be of interest to Rotarians in the United States and this fact, coupled with the fact that the Rotary Club of Havana is taking such a keen interest in the affairs of Cuba, leads me to conclude that it would be well to send a copy of the pamphlet with one of the issues of the Weekly Letter." Perry's efforts translated into Rotary's headquarters sending out over 3,200 copies of the pamphlet to all of its clubs throughout North America, Canada, and Great Britain. Indeed, Perry had originally

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

typed “2,500 copies” and then crossed that out with “3,200” in pen.<sup>391</sup> After all, Rotary clubs were popping up all over North America in 1918.

The Havana Rotarians had hit the jackpot. Thousands of Rotary clubs in the United States were about to receive a beautiful pamphlet placing Cuba in the best possible light imaginable – literally. The Havana Rotarians’ close association with the International Association of Rotary Clubs was about to reap handsome benefits as Perry’s introduction for the pamphlet was “calling attention to ... the activities of the Rotary Club of Havana in exploiting the natural resources of Cuba.”<sup>392</sup> Representative of a newly emerging entrepreneurial bourgeoisie during and because of World War I, the Havana Rotary club – along with the new clubs the Habaneros established in Matanzas, Cienfuegos, and Santiago de Cuba – would appear as the vanguard of Cuba’s economic and political development to tens of thousands of U.S. Rotarians. And, with only Montevideo, San Juan, and Panama City on the horizon for Latin American cities with Rotary clubs, Havana could still lay claim to being the main gateway for U.S., British, and Canadian Rotarians into all of Latin America. The 1918 pamphlet encapsulated well the high hopes and expectations of businessmen and professionals in the principal cities of Cuba, and especially in its capital city. Meanwhile, Rotary’s “world fellowship” was proving itself a booster’s dream and a Cuban patriot’s best friend as the promises of Rotary’s civic internationalism – cooperation, support, and respect in the name of civic development among business and professional peers across and despite borders – seemed to be paying off where and when it mattered most.

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<sup>391</sup> Chesley Perry to Mario MacBeath, 12 October 1918, Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

The club had occasion again to communicate with all the Rotary clubs in the United States. Only this time it was 1921 and boosterism had given way to tariff issues and protectionism in the face of recession in the United States and depression in Cuba after the “dance of the millions” in early 1920. The end of war meant the end of prosperity in the Americas as Europe recovered and demand in general fell off. While the severe drop in agricultural prices in the U.S. came to preoccupy the Republican Congress after 1920, the sugar prices in Cuba dropped precipitously from 22.5 cents per pound in May 1920 to 8 cents in September to 3.8 cents in December.<sup>393</sup>

For a country relying on sugar for over 90 percent of its total export value by 1920, this was calamitous. The old political class of Cuba, so accustomed to running the government without serious electoral challenge, found itself by 1921 confronted with a growing and self-aware economic class of Cubans no longer tolerant of government corruption and public malfeasance and much more committed to *la patria* than the preceding generation. The Havana Rotary club – or at least certain parts of the club – already saw itself as part of this broader trend by 1918. As the wild speculation and easy credit of 1919 and early 1920 slipped into bankruptcy and stagnation, it seemed that Cuba had lost its bearings economically. Meanwhile, given the messy and contested 1920 national elections and continuing revelations in the newspapers of rampant corruption by those in public office, the republic of Cuba looked more and more like a prodigal son in the eyes of many Cubans and Americans. The young nation was faltering both economically and politically, and in serious danger of surrendering its birthright as a “sister republic” of the Americas. It was not long before enforcement of the Platt Amendment arose. By the end of 1920, General Enoch Crowder arrived in Cuba as the

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<sup>393</sup> Perez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 225.

‘Special Representative of the President,’ staying in total for two years. The U.S. government sent Crowder to do some house-cleaning in the new government of Alfredo Zayas. Once an ‘honest cabinet’ had been created under Zayas as an inoculation of persistent government corruption, Cuba received a \$50 million loan from J.P. Morgan and Company in order to rectify its debt problems.<sup>394</sup> Amid this economic and political turmoil, the Havana Rotary Club sought the help of its fellow club members in the United States.

But the United States was dealing with its economic turmoil. By January 1921, Joseph W. Fordney, representative of the 8<sup>th</sup> District based in Saginaw, Michigan and the Republican Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, managed to pass the Emergency Tariff Bill. The hiatus of protectionism since 1913 under the Democrats’ Underwood-Simmons tariff system had come to an abrupt end. With Fordney blaming the postwar recession in the U.S. on low tariffs, he sought to construct a protective barrier especially for farm imports to the United States. Sugar tariffs were one of several prime targets for Fordney’s rate hikes. Not a single Cuban could fail to appreciate the threat Fordney’s bill in the U.S. Congress represented. But alas, no Cubans had any voice or way to lobby Congress like the interests in the sugar producing states of Louisiana, Michigan, California, and Colorado. By June 28, 1921, the Fordney bill that was to replace the Emergency Tariff bill with a permanent tariff system passed from Fordney’s committee to the full House for a vote.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 226 – 228.

<sup>395</sup> See Edward S. Kaplan, *American Trade Policy, 1923 – 1995* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996) and Edward S. Kaplan and Thomas W. Ryley, *Prelude to Trade Wars: American Tariff Policy, 1890 – 1922* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994). Also, Abraham Berglund, “The Tariff Act of 1922,” *American Economic Review* 13, 1923, 14 – 32.



Only three days later, the president of the Havana Rotary Club, Alberto Crusellas, wrote both Chesley Perry, Rotary's General Secretary, and its international president for that year, Pete Snedecor of Portland, Oregon, asking for permission to send a form letter to all the Rotary clubs of the U.S. asking their support in reclaiming some \$40,000,000 in wartime profits on Cuban sugar sold in the United States. With a letterhead listing all the club's officers, quoting Rotary's motto "He profits most who serves best" in Spanish translation, and reading at the bottom "La Habana Es El Segundo Puerto Comercial de America," club president Crusellas politely requested "permission to place in hands of the presidents of Rotary Clubs of the United States of America the enclosed letter" and invited Perry in particular to offer his "criticisms" and "impressions."<sup>396</sup>

The urgency of the matter, however, was clear. The Cuban economy was swimming in debt and he was acting at the formal behest of the Havana Rotary club, which had voted on a resolution to proceed with such a project the week before.<sup>397</sup> And why not? The precedent was already there. Just as Rotary's headquarters had enabled Havana to spread its message of Cuba's openness to "the capital and enterprise of the world" with its pamphlet in 1918, it would help in getting Cuba's views and concerns about its massive debt crisis out to its tens of thousands of their fellow Rotarians throughout the U.S. in 1921. The precedent was there. Even before the passage of the

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<sup>396</sup> Alberto Crusellas, Havana Rotary club president, to Estes Snedecor, president, 1 July 1921 and Crusellas to Chesley Perry, 1 July 1921. Both in Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives. Translation: "Havana is the second commercial port in America."

<sup>397</sup> Circular letter: The Rotary Club of Havana to the presidents of all the U.S. Rotary Clubs, 1 July 1921. Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives. Among other claims and demands, the Havana Rotarians were seeking repayment for the money made by the Sugar Equalization Board in the U.S. during World War I. The \$40,000,000 made by the Board would come in handy – to say the least – in wiping away Cuba's massive debts. Without such financial leverage, the U.S. might lose its political leverage as well.

Fordney bill, the Havana Rotarians were seeking desperate measures for desperate times.<sup>398</sup>

The Havana Rotarians had their sympathizers within the world of Rotary. The incoming international president of Rotary, Dr. Crawford McCullough of Ontario, Canada, saw the Cubans as simply wanting to “get the necessary authentic information on this whole subject before the business men of America and for this purpose it was desired to use the medium of Rotary clubs.”<sup>399</sup> The Cubans were fortunate to have a Canadian at the head of the I.A.R.C. at this juncture as Canada had its own particular problems with Fordney’s proposed tariffs and was open to considering U.S. trade policy from a non-U.S. perspective. But outgoing president Snedecor requested only that the claims made in Havana’s circular letter, specifically on the \$40,000,000 of profits made by the Sugar Equalization Board in the U.S. from Cuban sugar during World War I, be confirmed by Herbert Hoover’s Commerce Department.

Never one to leave any loose ends, Chesley Perry wrote the Secretary of Commerce on the matter and explained how “the Havana Club has courteously submitted this matter to us before sending it to any club in the United States.” Secretary Hoover’s ultimate response was quite telling:

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<sup>398</sup> Also, the massive demonstrations organized by the Matanzas Rotary Club on 10 December 1921 speak to this desperation, though it was set up to protest directly the coming Fordney tariffs. Dripping with “sentimiento patrióco,” the event also challenged the “corruption that threatened to invade and extend itself into all public spheres.” The club had already hand delivered to the U.S. Vice-Consul in Matanzas a formal protest against the Fordney tariff. “We need to let the highest powers of the State know the eagerness for moral purity and political house-cleaning that are driving the will of the nation.” For full details, see posters announcing the event: “Club Rotario de Matanzas: Orden e Itinerario de la Manifestacion del Dia 17” and “Rotary Club of Matanzas: Al Hon. Sr. Gobernador Provincial de Matanzas.” The latter document also read on its sides in Spanish: “Matanzas is the primary port for exporting sugar to the world.” The Club’s very source of civic pride and identity was also its own reason for such dependence on the world markets.

<sup>399</sup> Crawford C. McCullough, international president, to Chesley Perry, 12 August 1921, Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

There is no conceivable possibility of this money ever being used for Cuban purposes. The American government on two occasions purchased the crop of Cuban sugar at prices extraordinarily profitable to Cuban producers and in equalizing its distribution and transportation throughout the United States, in conjunction with domestic sugar, the Board earned the profits to which you refer. *These profits are the property of the American consumer and can only be returned to him by mitigation of his taxes.* I am intensely sympathetic with the difficulties in Cuba and this Department would be glad to exert itself in any direction to mitigate the situation.<sup>400</sup> [italics added]

Despite his “sympathetic” understanding of the Cubans’ present plight, Hoover could only see the Cubans’ case as a done deal – for the “American consumer.” The Cubans had played their dutiful part as an ally in the Great War and had to move on. Only now the Havana Rotarians were trying to cash in one last time on the heady days of wartime prosperity in the midst of economic chaos and foreclosures on a massive scale. Moving on for the Cubans meant a \$50,000,000 loan from J.P. Morgan, the reinforcement of the Platt Amendment, and further entrenchment of the U.S. government and capital in Cuba’s political economy. The \$40,000,000 the Havana Rotarians were seeking to reclaim through their circular letter would have been handy in undermining the scope and power of Plattism.

Secretary Hoover’s response, however, did not end the Havana Rotarians’ quest. Secretary Perry cabled Crusellas in Havana on September 3 reporting that Rotary’s International Board had approved the sending of Havana’s circular letter to all U.S. clubs as soon as possible since Hoover “did not contradict the statements made in the Havana letter.”<sup>401</sup> Crusellas cabled back that Perry’s message had been read at the club’s meeting

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<sup>400</sup> Estes Snedecor to Chesley Perry, 2 August 1921; Chesley Perry to Secretary of Commerce, 16 August 1921; Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, to Chesley Perry, 23 August 1921. All from Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>401</sup> Cable from Chesley Perry to Alberto Crusellas, 3 September 1921 and Memo, “Havana Sugar Matter,” 16 September 1921. Havana Club Files, Vol 1., RI Archives.

and they had voted unanimously to express the “clubs [sic] deep appreciation of your deference in this matter to Havana Club which we know is unusual.”<sup>402</sup> Havana’s circular letter was a study in mounting Cuban frustration with its deepening dependence on an international economic system centered around and managed by the United States. Cuba’s profound debt crisis of 1921 only exacerbated the political shame that was the Platt Amendment.

It was a time of change and upheaval throughout Cuba, and also a time of new political assertions and national solidarity. In that vein, the Havana club invoked the language and logic of civic internationalism to make its case. In tone, the form letter was polite, but it was time for Rotary to come through on its promises:

It is the fundamental motto of our organization to be useful to the society in which it lives, to its own town or city, to its State or Province, to its Nation, and with to humanity. And since our Nation is at the moment suffering through the effects of an intense economic crisis for the reason that it has not been able to place the sugar produced during the present crop owing to the lack of demand and consumption in our principal market, which is your country, we desire to avail ourselves of the services of our fellows in Rotary to make known to its people, to whom we are bound by ties of friendship and intense self interests, since to them we owe in a great degree the independence of our country, the causes that have given rise to our crisis . . . .<sup>403</sup>

With the drying up of demand for sugar in the U.S., Cuba’s entire economy seized up. A recession in the United States was a catastrophic depression Cuba. The crisis of 1921 was even more galling, according to the circular, because the U.S. government had urged the Cubans to produce sugar in huge abundance in the name of the allied war effort. The Cubans then pointed to the Sugar Equalization Board in the U.S. as the source of greatest inequity as the \$40,000,000 in profits went to the U.S. government in its spending for the

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<sup>402</sup> Cable from Alberto Crusellas to Chesley Perry, n.d., Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>403</sup> Circular Letter: The Rotary Club of Havana to the presidents of all the U.S. Rotary Clubs, 1 July 1921, p. 2. Havana Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.

war rather than to the Cubans who had produced the sugar and could have sold it on the world market at much higher prices. Without those war profits, the sugar planters had to “obtain loans of large sums of money from the banks,” resulting in the present debt crisis.

Contrary to Hoover’s argument, the Cubans reasoned that:

If Cuba realized by contract the sale of two entire crops [of 1917 and 1918], the same was not inspired with the remotest idea of profit but on the contrary agreed to and fixed a minimum price on its product as a co-operative measure in the cause of the Allies, waiving the opportunity brought about by the great necessity of the allied nations to grasp a legitimate profit. We believe therefore we have the right at this time to expect the co-operation of the great people of the United States in our economic difficulties, which resolves itself in the elimination of measures that discriminate [sic] against the consumption of our sugars.<sup>404</sup>

The lofty sentiments of patriotism and allied solidarity in order to stop the marauding Central Powers of Europe had given way to the economic rationale of Mr. Hoover in 1921. Ornate flag-raising ceremonies were replaced by contracts, Liberty Loan drives by debts, international cooperation and friendship by market forces and political power.

The circular then closed with a two-pronged strategy. The first centered on the notion of mutual interests given the close economic ties between the two countries.

“Since our country imports from the United States nearly all the articles necessary for our subsistence, it is of utmost interest to the commerce of your country. . . that it come out in the defence of our sugar industry, since if our sugar has no value, we cannot purchase from you . . .”<sup>405</sup> If a shared devotion to international friendship and cooperation proved too weak, then surely the Rotarians of the U.S. could understand the importance of Cuban markets for their exports. If the Cubans did not have a voice in the U.S. government and its policymaking, at least they might have some influence in the U.S. due to their

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<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*

aggregate purchasing power of U.S. consumer products. After a review of the rapid increase of U.S. imports to Cuba from 1917 – 1921, showing with “the eloquence of numbers” how much the U.S. did in fact rely on Cuban export markets, the argument concluded: “The campaign, therefore, launched against us in your country by certain refiners, is not only directed against us, but is also an attack against the general interests of the commerce of the United States.” But trade reciprocity between the two nations, in the end, did not entail political equality between its citizens. The exotic-peers in Cuban Rotary clubs had no pull in U.S. Congress.

The second strategy was more of a plea and redolent of the letter’s opening: “It would give us great pleasure if you would read this letter at the next meeting of your Rotary club . . . thus cooperating with us and in the spirit of the motto that inspires *our Institution*, and also to transmit to us the impression you may deduce after its reading at that meeting.”<sup>406</sup> Here was an opportunity for Rotary to operate as an international network of business and professional peers, to make possible the “commercial square deal” so central to its ideology of civic internationalism, to serve as a platform for international cooperation and understanding among nations and their civic and economic leaders rather than mere politicians.

But the “parliament of businessmen” had its limits. Though given approval to send the circular letter, no substantial results ever panned out. How could they? Given the scope and scale of the U.S. economy relative to Cuba’s, the severity of the economic travails of Cuba did not seem to register in the minds of U.S. Rotarians. It was one thing for a city’s club to put out an international plea for help after a natural disaster, as the Tokyo Rotary Club did with great success after the massive earthquake of 1923, but it

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<sup>406</sup> Ibid., Italics added.

was quite another to make a plea for compensation from the U.S. government three years after the fact and in the name of wartime solidarity.<sup>407</sup> Systemic economic inequalities and structural limits on Cuban development did not figure in the rhetoric of Rotary's heart-shaped world of international friendship and cooperation. Also, given the discrete and concentrated interests of sugar producers and refiners in the U.S. Congress (where tariffs were debated and set), the Cubans' private, informal approach of businessmen to businessmen had a rather dull edge. Instead, General Crowder oversaw Cuba's debt consolidations to the tune of \$50,000,000 from J.P. Morgan thanks to the Platt Amendment while the U.S. Congress muddled through with the Fordney-McCumber bill.

Rather than back payment on war profits in the midst of a debt crisis, the Cubans got a slap in the face. On 21 September 1922, Ohio's President Warren G. Harding signed the Fordney-McCumber bill into law, raising the sugar tariff for Cuba from \$1.25/lb to \$2.20/lb – an increase of nearly twofold.<sup>408</sup> Its effects on the Cuban economy were predictably devastating over time. Meanwhile, Harding, a proud and consummate Rotarian of the Washington, D.C. club, spoke the following June at Rotary's fourteenth annual international convention in St. Louis, Missouri. Introduced by Rotary's president Raymond Havens of Kansas City, Harding spoke to the nearly 7,000 in attendance:

If I could plant Rotary in every community throughout the world, I would do it, and then I would guarantee the tranquility and the forward march of the world. Statesmen have their problems, and governments have theirs, but if you could plant the spirit of Rotary throughout the world, and turn it to practical application, there would not be so much wrong with the human procession.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> See *The History of Rotary Club of Tokyo, Vol. 1*. (Tokyo: Rotary Club of Tokyo, 1926). In fact, Havana's club donated toward the cause.

<sup>408</sup> Edward Kaplan, "The Fordney-McCumber Tariff of 1922," EH.Net Encyclopedia, Robert Whaples, ed. 8 November 2004. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/Kaplan.Fordney>

<sup>409</sup> *Fourteenth Annual International Convention Proceedings*, St. Louis, Missouri, 231.

“Prolonged applause” followed his remarks. America had its moral compass, and Rotary was following it. International peace and progress were a function of managerial skills in “practical application” at the local level through voluntary associations like Rotary.

The next morning, in front of the same convention audience, Havana’s own Avelino Perez recounted the many playgrounds, drainage systems, parks, monuments, highways, dispensaries, and summer camps for Boy Scouts the eleven Rotary clubs of Cuba were responsible for in recent years. Speaking as Dr. Alzugaray’s replacement as district governor for all Cuban Rotary clubs, he explained that: “Due to the fact that, although Cuba is one of the oldest countries in America, it is one of the youngest in its organization as a republic, the work of the Cuba clubs during the past year has been to try to educate the citizens and inspire in them the real Rotary spirit of Service before Self.”<sup>410</sup>

Perez made no mention of the U.S. sugar tariffs or the Cubans’ debt crisis – and certainly nothing of the Platt Amendment and its imposition. Contrary to Dr. Alzugaray and Mario MacBeath, he did not believe a Rotary club was a place for political debate. RI’s civic internationalism did not allow such questioning of “the fraternal bonds of friendship and understanding.”

### **“Across Boundary Lines”**

Business relations between Florida and Cuba, nevertheless, continued to develop over the 1920s. As a result, the Havana Rotary club visited *en masse* the Miami Rotary club in August 1929 and 173 Miami Rotarians returned the favor in November that same

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<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 253 – 257.



year.<sup>411</sup> RI's monthly magazine, *The Rotarian*, touted these international exchanges as "probably the most significant demonstrations of Rotary internationalism."<sup>412</sup> Over several days, the Cubans treated the visiting Floridians like royalty. Planned activities included a large ceremony at the foot of the monument to Martí in Havana's Central Park – led by Havana's mayor and Rotarian, Miguel Mariano Gomez – followed by a tour of Havana's new Capitol building and then topped off by a lush dinner and ball at the Sevilla-Biltmore hotel where the entire Miami club was staying. Amid the various luncheons, swimming parties, and sightseeing tours of Cuba's universities, the Columbus Cathedral, and the great Central Highway were grand speeches by Dr. Antonio Sanchez de Bustamante (ex-president of the League of Nations), by Cuba's Secretary of State, and by many other Cuban dignitaries. After an ornate ceremony of flag exchange among clubs, the trip had its culmination: an "audience" with Cuba's President, Gerardo Machado, at the Presidential Palace.

Taking part in this international meeting of Rotarians had its advantages for General Machado.<sup>413</sup> One year into his second term, he was on the brink of entering into the true crisis period of his presidency just as the world was on the verge of the Great Depression. In need of political support wherever he could find it, he introduced himself

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<sup>411</sup> In January 1930, there were 163 members in the Havana club. Felix Granados, club president, to Luis Machado, District Governor for Cuba, "Informe de la Junta Directiva al Gobernador del Distrito," 15 January 1930, Havana Vol. 1, RI Archives.

<sup>412</sup> "Across Boundary Lines: Rotarians of Cuba and Florida adopt Rotary's good-will formula", *The Rotarian*, 30 January 1930, 26 – 27, 48.

<sup>413</sup> By far, one of the most active and respected members of the Havana Rotary club from the 1920s to the 1950s was Luis Machado, who served as a district governor for Cuba and on RI's Board of International Directors in the 1930s. Evidence suggests he was President Machado's nephew, which may help explain the General's name being on the club's Board of Directors in 1927 despite being an elected official – which was contrary to club by-laws. See letter from Mario Nuñez Mesa, Havana Club president, to George Treadwell, secretary of Chicago Rotary Club; 22 April 1927, Havana Vol 1., RI Archives. Support for President Machado appeared to be waning among Cuban Rotarians after 1930 even as Luis Machado was forging a stellar career in "international law" as well as in Rotary.

as a fellow Rotarian (though this was probably an honorary title) and proclaimed his faith in Rotary's

advancement and in its progress, because I knew that it represented the ideals of honesty, of integrity in business, love of fellow men, and above all love of country, and true patriotism, not only in Cuba, but also in the United States and all over the world.<sup>414</sup>

This was a striking introduction, if only because Machado's endorsement of Rotary's ideals stood in stark contrast to the political realities of Cuba and in accordance with his rivals' constant calls for greater honesty and integrity in Cuba's political system. But, as an economic reformer, Machado sought to move Cuba away from its monoculture of sugar production toward modernization and genuine independence.

Driven by such goals, Machado was happy to foster any U.S. business relations outside of the sugar industry. He chose his words well when characterizing the Floridians' presence in Cuba:

These visits, these gatherings, are very necessary, because they bring a truer understanding and a more sincere esteem between your and our people. As the United States and Cuba were bound by the ties of blood in 1898, when you came over to fight in our cause for our freedom, so must we continue to be bound forever and forever.

Through the alchemy of blood and freedom, Cuba and the United States were bound together in common cause, which then overflowed into the two nations' business and economic ties:

We must supply goods to the United States and the United States must supply goods to us. As we help your financial institutions, which are practically in many cases Cuban institutions, so you must help in the development and progress of our country, and in the expansion of our economic activities. We must always have a true, sincere, and mutually beneficial economic understanding. We must see in each other as sincere friends and co-operators. Our purposes and our ideals are the same.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> "Across Boundary Lines", *The Rotarian*, 48.

<sup>415</sup> *ibid.*

With the Platt Amendment challenged more and more by Cubans, the Depression only just beginning, and the restrictive Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act still a year off, Machado suggested that the purposes and ideals shared by both Cuban and U.S. Rotarians should be the basis for both mutually beneficial trade relations and for the recognition of Cuban sovereignty and independence. The civic internationalism of RI allowed Machado to make these assertions to ringing applause from Miami's top businessmen and professionals.

Machado closed by exhorting his "fellow Rotarians" to return to the U.S. to serve as "personal witnesses" to Cuba's being "a progressive, peaceful, orderly, and civilized country, a democracy full of civic enthusiasm and deep patriotism" and to counter the recent "publication of biased and untruthful reports about Cuba, which hurt the mutual understanding and good feeling that ought forever to exist between us."<sup>416</sup> Machado's paean to U.S.- Cuban "ties of blood" questioned the inequalities of the Platt Amendment in a language that would reassure rather than offend his audience of Florida businessmen and their spouses. He and the Cuban Rotarians needed their business and investments. Unfortunately, the sunny language of friendship and cooperation could no more derail Cuba's political and economic dependence on the U.S. than could the promise of "beneficial economic understanding" and trade reciprocity.<sup>417</sup>

The international exchange between the Rotary clubs of Havana and Miami was viewed as such a success that plans were made to make it an annual ritual. Tampa's Rotary club, not to be outdone by Miami's, had already invited the Havana club for a

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<sup>416</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>417</sup> On this particular point, see Oscar Zanetti, *Los Cautivos de la Reciprocidad* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2003)

visit the following year. A friendly rivalry between Tampa and Miami Rotarians over Havana could only benefit the Cuban Rotarians and their business community.

Meanwhile, *The Rotarian* summed up the triumphant moment of internationalism: “Thus Rotary is helping in the great effort toward the supplanting of envy, rivalry, and war with sympathetic international understanding, a force that will eventually put happiness in the place of ill-will and unite the world in the bonds of peace. Good will between countries begins in a friendly handclasp across frontiers.”<sup>418</sup>

However, the success was more apparent than real. The rhetoric could paint over the inequities of Plattism for only so long. Within two years, Cuba’s sugar exports plummeted as unemployment skyrocketed, leading to “conditions [that] set the stage for political confrontation and social conflict on a scale unprecedented in the republic.”

Machado’s government began to unleash repression that “summoned into existence an extensive police apparatus penetrating every aspect of Cuban social life, not only to arrest, torture, and execute but to maintain surveillance over Cubans not in prison and over the countless thousands who were.”<sup>419</sup> By the fall of 1933, Sumner Welles, Roosevelt’s Assistant Secretary of State turned U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, had engineered a palace coup to replace Machado and then a second coup to replace the reformist government of Grau San Martín with Fulgencio Batista, a mutinous sergeant turned military dictator.<sup>420</sup> From friendly business visits from Florida to the engineering of palace coups in the name of public safety, the Janus-faced nature of reform and

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<sup>418</sup> “Across Boundary Lines”, *The Rotarian*, 48.

<sup>419</sup> Pérez, Jr., *Cuba*, 253 – 256.

<sup>420</sup> For a detailed account of Welles’s “engineering,” see Philip Dur and Christopher Gilcrease, “U.S. Diplomacy and the Downfall of a Cuban Dictator: Machado in 1933,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 34, no. 2, May 2002, 255 – 282.

empire, friendship and domination, cooperation and control, permeated U.S.- Cuban relations.

### **“Nuestra Organización”**

The Cienfuegos Rotary Club held a *Concurso Escolar* open to all seventh and eighth graders of the city in 1929 and again in 1930. All students, male and female, from all schools, public and private, participated in the essay competition on “the importance of increasing our industries, and the production of raw products on our soil.” Three girls and one boy won medals, diplomas, and books on the competition’s topic. The students received their prizes at “a public festivity with the solemnity worthy of an event in behalf of childhood.”<sup>421</sup> The twenty-four members of the Cienfuegos Rotary Club suggested that Rotary International publish a photo of the event in *The Rotarian*. The year prior the Matanzas Rotary Club had organized a *Concurso Nacional* for seventh and eighth graders and now the Cienfuegos club was administering one of its own “concursos locales.” Cuban Rotary clubs often competed with each other in this manner, copying each other’s successful events, activities, and projects while seeking to outdo fellow clubs as well.

The themes for the national writing competition in Cienfuegos, however, were much more telling of Cuban Rotarians’ national concerns:

- 1) Products necessary for the subsistence that can be obtained on our soil – “en nuestro suelo.”
- 2) Application of these products to existing industries.
- 3) Which new industries could establish themselves given the raw materials found in our country? – “nuestra Patria”

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<sup>421</sup> Program: “Rotary Club of Cienfuegos: Concurso Escolar Celebrado Bajo Los Auspicios Del Rotary Club de Cienfuegos. 1929 – 1930” Cienfuegos Club File, Vol. I, RI Archives.

4) Why do we need and must augment our commercial and industrial capacity?<sup>422</sup>

Cubans in general shared these concerns since the Great Depression had already arrived in full force years before it became a worldwide phenomenon. The long-held desire to escape the venomous legacies of the sugar monoculture and its dependence on the global market value of sugar dominated these writing competitions for years as it dominated practically all other aspects of Cuban culture and national discourse.

But the Cienfuegos Rotarians decided to publicize their student essay contest throughout RI's "world fellowship" as well as Cuba. The club published a pamphlet "in memory of the Contest," which was sent to the twenty-two other Rotary clubs in Cuba and to all other Spanish speaking Rotary clubs of Latin America and the Caribbean – about 150 in all. Antonio Asensio, the club's secretary and a charter member in 1919, also sent copies of the pamphlet to RI's seventy-six District Governors and fifteen Board members scattered throughout the Americas, East Asia, and Europe and to RI's top officials headquartered in Chicago.<sup>423</sup> The Rotarians of Cienfuegos wanted to make a splash with their *Concurso Escolar* in the world of Rotary, but especially in the Spanish speaking portions of it.

To that end, they drew up a cover letter for the pamphlet in Spanish that trumpeted "the progress of our organization ('nuestra organización') in carrying to the ends of the earth the healthy norms of our Rotarian ethic."<sup>424</sup> The letter explained further how helping the children of the city was the club's principal activity that year and then

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Each District Governor was responsible for the oversight of about 40 clubs in a given district. In 1930, there were about 3,300 clubs with 153,000 members worldwide.

<sup>424</sup> Actual text: "...el progreso de nuestra organización lleve a todos los lugares de la tierra las sanas normas de nuestra etica rotaria."

closed with a request that other clubs share any information with them on similar activities in their own clubs and cities. Presenting the civic projects of the Cienfuegos Rotarians as part of the mainstream of RI's civic internationalism also meant spotlighting Cuba's economic and political troubles before an international audience. The publicity of the *Concurso Escolar* was, in truth, an international plea for help.

That it came from the Cienfuegos Rotarians marked a milestone in the evolution of Rotary clubs in Cuba and of RI's civic internationalism. First, the Cienfuegos club was completely homegrown. Key Cuban Rotarians from Havana were instrumental in organizing the club's first meeting on the Fourth of July, 1919. Dr. Adalberto Ruiz, lawyer and charter member in Cienfuegos, celebrated the auspicious date of his club's founding on "this glorious day in honor to the Great American Nation that in this day celebrates the anniversaries of its independence." To mark the occasion, Ruiz reported in broken English to the Chicago headquarters, "Were present, as special invited, the civil, judicial and military authorities, the consuls of United States, France and Spain and representatives of the local press."<sup>425</sup> After apologizing for his English, Ruiz then touted the club's first president, Dr. Sotero Ortega, a "famous and prestigious physician." The Cienfuegos club received a great deal of support in its formation from the president of the Havana Rotary Club, Dr. Carlos Alzugaray; its club secretary, Mario MacBeath; and Avelino Perez: Havana's most devoted Rotarians in 1919. Given particular help from

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<sup>425</sup> Dr. Adalberto Ruiz to Chesley Perry, 19 July 1919; Cienfuegos Club Files; Vol. 1; RI Archives.

from Alzugaray and Perez, Dr. Ortega expected his club to become a full participant in “the great family of Rotary” – “en la gran familia rotaria.”<sup>426</sup>

Second, the Cienfuegos club’s membership encompassed more of the city’s business community than the charter membership of the Havana club. The new club’s thirty-nine charter members included a hardware store owner, a civil engineer, a cigar factory owner, a dentist, a sugar exporter, a furniture maker, a corporate lawyer, a distillery owner, a rancher, a real estate agent, a pharmacist, a pediatrician, and so on.<sup>427</sup> The club seemed to embody Rotary’s ideal of a “cross-section of representative businessmen and professionals” coming together in mutual cooperation and for the sake of civic improvement. The Cienfuegos club, in microcosm, appeared to be a balanced and diverse local economy.

Third, not only was the club started by Cubans and predominantly comprised of Cubans, but so was its founding leadership. Joining president Dr. Ortega were vice-president Acisclo del Valle, a commercial banker; Club secretary Dr. Adalberto Ruiz, notary public; Treasurer Florencio R. Velis, printer; board members of similar backgrounds and reputation; and Luis Hernandez, Sergeant-at-Arms and broker at the customs house.<sup>428</sup> The club did not have the “elemento Americano” that Dr. Alzugaray and Mario MacBeath contended with in Havana. With no one predominant industry, corporation, or profession and nearly 100 percent native Cuban, the Cienfuegos Rotary club embodied the promises of Rotary’s civic internationalism: local empowerment of

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<sup>426</sup> Dr. Sotero Ortega to Chesley Perry, 28 August 1919; Cienfuegos Club Files; Vol. 1; RI Archives. The letterhead for the Cienfuegos Rotary club was already in use, and completely in Spanish.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid, see attached membership list: “Lista de Socios”

<sup>428</sup> Charter application from club for membership in I.A.R.C., 7 August 1919, Cienfuegos Club Files, Vol. 1, RI Archives.



business and professional elites for the sake of community service and their incorporation into a transnational network of like-minded peers. Only three years after the formation of the Havana club, the I.A.R.C. had realized its goals in Cienfuegos while other Rotary clubs popped up in much the same manner in Matanzas, Santiago de Cuba, Colon, and dozens of other Cuban cities.

The Cienfuegos Rotary club had a promising start in 1919. The diversity of its charter membership boded well for an emerging, vibrant economic center in Cuba at the end of the Great War. All its weekly meetings, civic activities, and committee business were done in Spanish from its inception and with the improvement of Cienfuegos and Cuba in mind. The club's credentials as a fully Cuban organization firmly rooted in the business and professional communities of the city and country were unassailable.

The establishment of Rotary clubs in other Cuban cities over the next decade, therefore, represented an important phase in RI's civic internationalism. Rotary's pervasiveness in Cuba and its capacity to attract the exotic-peers imagined by its mission of civic internationalism distinguished it from other U.S. voluntary associations: the Cienfuegos Rotary club was by no means an outpost for Americans abroad. Consequently, the Cienfuegos Rotarians' *Concurso Escolar* and its subsequent publicity in Rotary's international network of peers demonstrated both the legitimacy of their own *Cubanidad* – the theme for the competition was driven by Cuban nationalism – as well as the endemic nature of U.S. imperialism in Cuba – the theme for the *Concurso* underscored the vice-like grip of U.S. economic control of the island nation without actually naming it.

By 1929 – 30, the looming sense of dependence on the world price of sugar and the political vicissitudes and tariff policies of the United States slowly overshadowed, step by step, year by year, any hope of independent political and economic development for Cuba. As the drive toward a diverse and growing economy tapered off by the late 1920s, the Cienfuegos Rotarians – along with their fellow Cuban Rotarians – put together their national essay competition in an effort to re-ignite hope, especially in their youth, for a better future. Their fellow Rotarians outside Cuba, however, did not seem to grasp the gravity of the situation. To them, the Cuban Rotarians had a lot of ‘pep.’ The borderless world of “nuestra organización” posited by RI’s civic internationalism and supported by the Cienfuegos Rotarians did, in fact, have its borders.

### **Conclusion**

By the time Havana played host to Rotary International’s 1940 convention, Cuba seemed to be coming of age. A modicum of trade reciprocity and the Good Neighbor Policy had replaced the hated Platt Amendment. Economic growth and political stability were emerging. Women’s suffrage had passed. And now Cuba was nearing its first real constitution. All the pieces for a vibrant political system and civil society looked to be coming together. So when Geronimo Ramirez Brown, one of RI’s top officers worldwide, addressed the convention on “Rotary from an Ibero-American Viewpoint,” his triumphalist tones did not seem out of place. Ramirez, from Nicaragua, drew from the familiar practices, iconography, and discourse of RI’s civic internationalism:

Let us...look upon ...the flags of numerous countries of the world ..., showing that the idea embodied in Rotary has blossomed out in all parts of the world; men of different races, speaking different languages, from all regions of the earth, have come here . . . to the heart of Rotary which unites them in common human aspiration of improvement.

Many of them did not know each other before today; here, under the shadow of Rotary . . . , they shook hands, they are becoming acquainted and getting together in order to continue working in harmony each in his own sphere, for the good of his city, of his country and of the world.<sup>429</sup>

Echoing the convention's opening address by Cuba's President, Laredo Brú, Ramirez struck all the right chords. The shared mission of civic uplift and global harmony "under the shadow of Rotary" pointed to a universalism that claimed both to transcend and validate local, national, cultural and even some racial differences among certain ranks of business and professional men in the Americas. Rotary's civic internationalism seemed transcendent of any one nation's political and economic interests. Its egalitarianism seemed to empower each participant "in his own sphere." For Ramirez, the growing international presence of RI in Latin America was transformative.

But the cultural power of RI's civic internationalism operated within a larger web of economic, political, and military power relations. It was transformative in ways Rotarian Ramirez would and could not acknowledge. During the same time thousands of Rotarians were gathering in their convention, U.S. diplomatic representatives were looking to hammer out a series of formal military agreements with Cuba and all other Latin American nations over the summer of 1940 in anticipation of possible Nazi aggression in the Caribbean basin. As the war in Europe progressed, the Caribbean and Latin America looked more and more vulnerable to German incursions. Pan-American unity would require common defense in a time of world war. Military preparations and formal agreements between the U.S. and Cuba could not be a matter of public debate, however, as the United States was still formally neutral. While Rotarians gathered before massive audiences to give speeches on international peace through understanding, U.S.

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<sup>429</sup>*Convention Proceedings*; Havana, Cuba; 9 – 13 June 1940; 98 – 99.

and Cuban government and military officials were negotiating the details of hemispheric defense against the Axis powers.

The day before Secretary of State Campa's reading of President Laredo Brú's opening address at RI's convention, the Cuban president and Colonel Pedraza, Chief of Staff of the Cuban Army, met with George Messersmith, the U.S. ambassador in Cuba, and two U.S. military officers. According to Messersmith, the meeting went well as "full agreement in principle had been reached" and, with Batista's approval in hand as well, he was happy to report a month later that "the preliminary conversations with Cuba and the other American States so fully conform to the spirit of solidarity existing among the American States."<sup>430</sup> But military cooperation among the U.S. and Latin American countries was hardly a secret by late July, after the Havana Conference of Foreign Ministers pronounced the Act of Havana, a formal ratification of the political, diplomatic, and military commitments of the "American republics" in defense against any encroachments into the Americas by the Axis powers. By early September 1940, Cuba had granted "full use of Cuban territory" by the United States. Hemispheric cooperation in the shadow of war was not simply a theme for Rotary's convention in Havana in June 1940. It was also a military and political priority as well for all attending Rotarians' countries.

While the President of Cuba had his Secretary of State read his opening address to Rotary's 3,700 conventioners, he and the Cuban military negotiated with U.S. military and diplomatic officials. The private meeting of public officials at the President's Finca

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<sup>430</sup> Ambassador George Messersmith to Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, 10 June 1940, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS): Diplomatic Papers, 1940*, Vol. 5, "The American Republics," 95 – 96 and Ambassador Messersmith to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 16 July 1940, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1940*, Vol. 5, "The American Republics," 97 – 98.

reflected one form of U.S. hegemony in Cuba; the public gathering of private businessmen amidst the flowers and flags of the Grand Salon in the Centro Asturiano a different form. But the events were mutually reinforcing manifestations of power that formed an interlocking and multi-faceted pattern of growing U.S. hegemony in Cuba before, after, and despite the abrogation of the Platt Amendment in 1934. The United States had multiple forms of international engagement during the interwar period, each working to its own effect.

The cultural practices and social networking at the core of RI's civic internationalism dovetailed with the military, political, and diplomatic requirements of the United States. The common denominator was acquiescence on the part of Cubans to the demands of the United States and the persistent blindness of many both inside and outside the United States to the imperial nature of those demands. Hierarchy of relations – whether in the name of defending or improving Cuba – still entailed inequality. Likewise, deference to U.S. institutions – whether public or private – still had its price. The tension between the anti-colonialism of the Teller Amendment and the imperialism of the Platt Amendment played itself out in the Rotary clubs of Cuba, “under the shadow of Rotary.” The denial of empire required immense cultural energy, particularly so in Cuba, where U.S. economic imperialism was so manifest for so long under the shadow of the Platt Amendment.

**Chapter 5:**  
**“Trailing Along Through Asia”: Jim and Lillian Davidson and the “new world of business”**

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Would this Rotary, born in a city of the central western prairies of the United States, be acceptable to peoples with racial customs and backgrounds differing from those of Occidental peoples?

- Paul Harris, Founder of Rotary International, 1933<sup>431</sup>

When Rotarian Tom Knight of the Du Pont Company went back to Westfield, NY, just before leaving for China, he met there...an old lady who had known him since he was a small boy. ‘Tom,’ she said, ‘I hear you are going to China; on what mission?’

‘Du Pont,’ said Tom.

‘Strange,’ she said, ‘I never heard of that mission, but I know you will do lots of good, Tom.’

Laughter.<sup>432</sup>

**Introduction**

The March 1930 edition of *The Rotarian* featured five “Rotary Personalities” of note. Three of the five dignitaries presented were European: Kurt Belfrage, LL.B., Ph.M., director of the Stockholm Stock Exchange and president of the Stockholm Rotary Club; Alfred Jerger, noted Austrian tenor in the Vienna State Opera and member of the Vienna Rotary Club; and C. Lana Sarrate, ScD., metallurgist at the Royal Polytechnic Institute in Barcelona and member of that city’s Rotary club. The fourth

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<sup>431</sup> See introduction by Harris in Lillian Dow Davidson, *Making New Friends from Near to Far East for Rotary* (Chicago: Rotary International, 1934), n.p.

<sup>432</sup> *Eleventh Annual Convention Proceedings*; International Association of Rotary Clubs; 21 – 25 June 1920; Atlantic City, New Jersey; 30.

Rotarian, James L. Ralston, was Canada's Minister of National Defence and representative at the Five-Power Naval Conference in London.<sup>433</sup> The fifth Rotarian, Hamzah bin Abdullah, contrasted sharply with the four respectable portraits of white men in their suits and ties. Wearing a colorful headdress and a distinctly non-western shirt, Abdullah is introduced as a "Malayan member" of the Kuala Lumpur Rotary club and "magistrate in the government service" who had recently spoken to his club "on the significance of movements such as Rotary as a factor in bringing together business men with diverse racial and political characteristics."<sup>434</sup> Abdullah's words were not mere rhetoric. At its inaugural meeting in November 1929, the Kuala Lumpur club was already a model of racial diversity for the period. Its charter membership of 26 Europeans, 17 Chinese, 9 Ceylonese, 4 Malays, 4 Indians, and 1 Eurasian was headed by Choo Kia Peng, "a well-known rubber estate owner" and the first club president, and L. D. Gammans of the Malayan Civil Service, the first club secretary.<sup>435</sup> But why would Hamzah bin Abdullah speak to his fellow Rotarians of Kuala Lumpur in such sweeping language? Why would Rotary International wish to showcase Rotarian Abdullah and his club before approximately 100,000 of its monthly readers? And most obvious of all, how was it that Kuala Lumpur had a thriving Rotary club? It was 1930, after all. Not 1960.

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<sup>433</sup> Of the four, Ralston and Belfrage were the most active members of RI. Ralston traveled to Australia and New Zealand in 1921 with James W. Davidson to establish several clubs in each of those British Dominions while Belfrage was a very active member of RI's European Advisory Committee.

<sup>434</sup> *The Rotarian*, March 1930, 21.

<sup>435</sup> Box 70: Central Files/Subject Files: [Honorary General Commissioner] (H750c) James W. Davidson, Vol. III, Oct 1929 – 30 June 1930, "Letter to Presidents No. 8," Rotary International Archives; Evanston, Illinois. (All following citations will refer simply to the JWD Papers, Vol. #, dates, and specific document.) See also announcement of the formation of the Kuala Lumpur club under Choo Kia Peng's leadership in *The Rotarian*, February 1930, "Malayan Welcomes Rotary," 7 and JWD Papers; Vol. VII, "Original Reports," Report #19, "Federated Malay States," 1.

Only a few pages after Mr. Abdullah's image in *The Rotarian*, one finds the second installment of Lillian Dow Davidson's travel series entitled "Trailing Through Asia." The Davidsons had just arrived in Constantinople in the fall of 1928 to establish the first of many Rotary clubs throughout Asia only to find the city renamed "Istamboul" and a "modern Turkey" rapidly replacing the Ottoman Empire in all facets of social, political, and economic life. In her article, Lillian Davidson details "the amazing reforms that are working a magical over-night transformation in Turkey, seen by the wife of Rotary's special commissioner in Asia," James W. Davidson.<sup>436</sup> As the Davidsons continued their journey from the Eastern Mediterranean through the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, the Dutch East Indies, southern China, Formosa, northern China, Manchuria, Korea, and finally Japan from the fall of 1928 to the spring of 1931, Lillian began chronicling their travels in monthly contributions to *The Rotarian* magazine (from February 1930 to January 1933). Lillian's articles soon became so popular that they eventually found their way into more general magazines in reprinted form and translated into several languages. The Davidsons' travels had become the stuff of romance and lore not just for tens of thousands of Rotarian families in North America, Latin America, and Europe who were following the monthly installments, but also for the popular culture in general in several countries. Lillian's particular talent for blending the observational skills of an amateur cultural anthropologist with a kind of homespun, journalistic style had an overall comforting, didactic effect for her middlebrow readers, transforming the exotic lands of "Arabian Nights" into more recognizable forms and

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<sup>436</sup> *The Rotarian*, March 1930, 29.



characters of middle-class North America. Lillian was not just along for the ride. She was a veritable public relations *coup* for RI's internationalist aspirations.<sup>437</sup>

The common link between Hamzah bin Abdullah's eager embrace of his own, local Rotary club in Kuala Lumpur and Lillian's regular dispatches from Asia was James W. Davidson, "Special Commissioner" for RI. Davidson's particular task was to fill in the gap between Prague and Shanghai with a "golden chain" of Rotary clubs, thereby allowing RI full circumnavigation of the globe and providing "the Rotary traveler" the chance to "take any of the important steamers plying between London and Tokyo and find a Rotary club at nearly every port."<sup>438</sup> In effect, by the late 1920s, RI's upper echelons – at that point drawn from the United States, Canada, Western Europe, East Asia, and Latin America – had come to view the "gap" between the Eastern European Rotary clubs and the Chinese and Japanese clubs on the opposite end of the Eurasian landmass as an intolerable disconnect. RI mapped out its future international expansion along pre-established lines of international trade and across imperial, political, and geographical frontiers with an astonishing degree of confidence and sense of inevitability. Not unlike the British Empire's "Cape-to-Cairo" geographical imaginings, with the endpoints defined, it was only a question of how and where to connect the dots in between. And Jim Davidson, former U.S. consular agent in several cities in East Asia and successful Canadian businessman, was the ideal choice for such a grand project.

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<sup>437</sup> Paul Harris made this clear in his introduction to the compilation of all her dispatches in Davidson, *Making New Friends*, n.p.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p. Actually, there were a handful of unofficial Rotary clubs started by enthusiastic Rotarians who had moved to Asia for professional reasons: Calcutta and Lahore in India; Thayetmo, Burma; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Bangkok, Siam. In those cases, Davidson was expected to ascertain local circumstances and bring them into formal alignment with RI's constitutional rules, by-laws, and membership credentials (or else remove their right to use the "brand name" of RI and its logo, image, and slogans).

The Davidsons' story of "trailing through Asia," therefore, contrasts with RI's experience in Cuba in revealing ways. The hegemonic presence of the United States in Cuba after 1898 initially promised much in the way of Cuban independence but ultimately allowed little room for accommodation of *Cubanidad* in the most fundamental matters of economic and political interests. Like Cuba itself, the Havana Rotarians began with much promise as "allies" of the war effort in the 1910s and full partners in RI's civic internationalism, but later found themselves a source of ridicule in the wake of World War II. Whereas the Cuban Rotarians' transition from cross-border business progressives united in a common destiny to marginal status in the early cold war order occurred in a fixed space over time, the Davidsons' narrative took place over a great expanse of space within a relatively short period of time. Observing the expansion of Rotary clubs along these distinct spatial and temporal axes of analysis provides us with complementary perspectives on the nature of emerging forms of US imperialism in very different historical contexts. The Davidsons found themselves operating in a variety of strikingly different political and cultural environments ranging from Athens, Istanbul, Cairo, and Jerusalem all in massive political flux to the oil fields and companies of Iran and Iraq; from the well established trading centers of the British Empire such as Bombay, Singapore, and Hong Kong to key cities in the Dutch and French imperial possessions such as Jakarta, Batavia, Saigon, and Hanoi. Nor were the Davidsons limited to European imperial trading centers. With an itinerary that also included Manila, Taipei, Shanghai, Bangkok, Dairen, Mukden, Harbin, Seoul, and many Japanese cities, the Davidsons were hop-scotching through independent nations such as China and Siam as well as Japanese, Russian, and US imperial possessions. Unlike the confined space of

Havana under the shadow of the Platt Amendment and its legacies, the scope of operation for the Davidsons spread over very scattered, complex, and overlapping fields of racial, religious, colonial, and gendered “others” and across emerging transnational class solidarities.

The Davidsons’ “trailing through Asia,” as such, marked the high-water mark of RI’s civic internationalism during the interwar period. On the eve of the Great Depression and the economic nationalisms and militant fascisms of the 1930s, the establishment of 23 new Rotary clubs between Prague and Shanghai by Jim and the popularization of the lands and peoples in which those clubs were formed by Lillian linked the domestic space of Rotarians’ hearth and home with interwar projections of US cultural and economic influence “abroad,” transforming the far-flung cities of European imperial powers in Asia into communities peopled with different yet recognizable faces, where one might consider touring with the family in the near future or searching out for business prospects. Both Laura Wexler and Amy Kaplan have already demonstrated how “manifest domesticity” and “domestic sentimentalism” can serve as “an imperial instrument” in convincing manner.<sup>439</sup> In a similar vein, this chapter contends that the Davidsons’ “trailing through Asia” reified the ideological content and social regulations of US middle-class business and domestic cultures in the “foreign” lands where they were at work, providing a kind of stagecraft for American corporate capitalism and domestic sensibilities in theatres of European imperial hegemony once seen as well beyond the purview of US imperial reach. Jim’s successful manipulations of the

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<sup>439</sup> Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), esp. chap 1, “What a woman can do with a camera” on the concept of “domestic sentimentalism.” Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

corporate and colonial structures of European and non-European elites in the name of establishing Rotary clubs, in other words, represented a significant contribution to the construction of postwar US global hegemony as well as emerging forms of global capitalism. Meanwhile, the “domestic sentimentalism” of Lillian’s writings became as important to both her male and female readers as she, a devoted wife and mother, made the presence of Rotary clubs and her own family’s travels in such far-off lands seem natural and attainable. In their own way, both Lillian and Jim were engaging in a form of domestication – Jim with his 2,200+ sit-down interviews with potential Rotarian recruits among Asia’s business and professional elites and Lillian with her family-friendly writings for those back “home.”

The appearance of Hamzah bin Abdullah in his headdress and Eastern garb among four white Rotarians in familiar suits and ties had a heuristic quality for the many thousands of readers of *The Rotarian*. Though one of countless everyday moments in which RI inculcated its membership in the expanding world of Rotary’s “world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of service,” Abdullah’s appearance was also an important rupture in the middle-class fabric of Main Street in 1930. While Rotarian Abdullah and his fellow Kuala Lumpur club members learned directly from Jim Davidson the many social, political, and economic obligations incumbent upon all Rotarians worldwide, the Malaysian Rotarians, it turned out, forced Jim to reconfigure some of those same “obligations,” particularly in adaptation to the complexities of race and class in Malaysia (and much to the chagrin of RI’s own leaders and members.) The complex negotiations at play in Abdullah’s presence in *The Rotarian*

– the teaching and learning spanning oceans and empires, races and classes – I call RI’s “heuristics of empire.” And no one was better at it than Jim and Lillian Davidson.

### **Among States and Markets**

Just after the Duchess of Atholl set sail from Montreal on her way to Liverpool in late summer 1928, an announcement was made to all aboard: “Rotarians will please report their names to the purser’s office.” Jim and Lillian Davidson were behind the announcement. Among others answering the call was E.J. Ottaway, publisher, head of the University of Michigan’s alumni association, and former president of the Port Huron Rotary club. For Ottaway and his wife, the sailing was the first leg of their annual European tour. For the Davidsons, however, it was a very different kind of trip. As E.J. Ottaway put it: “For a year [the Davidsons] will be going the rounds of our little universe, in an endeavor to spread the gospel of Rotary in Cairo, in Athens, in Constantinople,....”<sup>440</sup> What drove the Davidsons to take on such an enormous commitment? How were they any different from their traveling companions, the Ottaways, or from the thousands of missionaries sent out in the name of a different gospel?

Jim, Lillian, and their teenage daughter Marjory were commencing on a trip that would last – as it turned out – well over two years, cost over \$32,000 for RI and about \$250,000 for the Davidsons, result in over 2,200 personal interviews of top business and professional recruits in Asia, give rise to a popular serialization of their travels, and lead

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<sup>440</sup> E.J. Ottaway, “We Have Seen: Being an account of six weeks in England and France in 1928,” Vol. II, 4, Bentley Historical Library; Ann Arbor, Michigan.

to twenty-three new Rotary clubs across the Asian continent.<sup>441</sup> This section sketches a biographical picture of Jim Davidson and then explores his methods of preparation for recruiting the “representative men” of each city he planned to visit in Asia. Knowing well the nature of diplomatic protocols as well as the language and practices of corporate capitalism, Jim Davidson knew how to use the established social and economic networks of European imperial powers to his and RI’s advantage. Indeed, he openly admired them. In his mind, Jim was not so much supplanting European colonial structures, but only improving and modernizing them in terms more amenable to “modern” forms of business practices and civic cooperation – as defined by Rotary International. His was hardly a post-colonial or anti-imperialist agenda. Rather, Jim Davidson blurred his own personal experience within U.S. consular agencies and western Canadian businesses in whichever way would seem most persuasive at the time. In other words, Jim Davidson was just as nimble in diplomatic circles as he was in business meetings, just as comfortable working with European colonial administrators as he was with those colonized by Europeans. This proved crucial not only to Jim’s success at every point in his long journey, but for the development of RI’s internationalist designs in general. The building up of RI’s “world fellowship of business and professional men” demanded an artful dodger among state agents, marketplace actors, and non-profit managers in a variety of cultural, political, and economic circumstances. It was tantamount to choosing from and

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<sup>441</sup> Robert Lampard, “Making New Friends: James Wheeler Davidson and Rotary International,” *Alberta History*, 22 June 2004, Vol. 52: 3, 2 – 11. See also David C. Forward, *A Century of Service: The Story of Rotary International* (Evanston, IL: Rotary International, 2003), Chapter 7, “Rotary Goes International,” 77 – 87; “James W. Davidson: The Marco Polo of Rotary,” *The Rotarian*, October 1979, 38 – 39; and for a more complete biography of Jim Davidson, see N. T. Joseph, *James Wheeler Davidson, Profile of a Rotarian* (Cochin, India: Cochin Rotary Club, 1987) and A.O. MacRae, *The History of Province of Alberta*, (Western Canada History, 1912), 565 – 567.

credentialing the basic elements of an emerging transnational class formation according to RI's imagined standards of character and understanding of the public good.

Given his personal background, Jim was RI's man for the job. Officially, Davidson was not seeking to establish Rotary clubs in the name of the Canadian or U.S. government. Nor was he explicitly serving the interests of any one industry or corporation. On the contrary, tens of thousands of Rotarians saw Davidson as a kind of missionary and a kind of salesman for RI's civic internationalism. There was a distinct blend of religious aura and salesmanship behind his mission to Asia. When RI's Extension Committee agreed upon its eight principles for international expansion in 1925, for example, it proclaimed:

In extending Rotary, Rotarians may be likened to salesmen selling an idea or missionaries preaching a gospel; and a good salesman does not give up because at first his prospective customer will not buy his merchandise; nor does a good missionary quit because the heathen are slow to accept his gospel.<sup>442</sup>

No one contributed more to such policy formulations over the course of the 1920s than Jim Davidson. After joining the Calgary Rotary club in 1914 and rapidly moving up the ranks of leadership in Canada, Davidson first became actively involved with the development and expansion of Rotary just after World War I. His first stint on the "publications" committee in 1920 soon led to a position on the Extension Committee (1921 – 23, 1924 – 26, 1927 – 28, 1930 – 32), which was renamed the "International Service Committee" in 1928 and first chaired by him. In short, the merger of selling merchandise and spreading the gospel into one "principle" had its own seamless logic for a mission-minded businessman like Jim Davidson.

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<sup>442</sup> "Report of the Extension Committee to the Board of Directors," File: [Committee – Extension – (Minutes Book, July 1925 – Aug 1929)], RI Archives.

In fact, Jim Davidson had learned the fine arts of salesmanship and diplomacy long before his service on RI's most important committees. Born in Austin, Minnesota in 1872, Jim's first job was organizing tours for the Austin Opera House, leading to a job in New York City with the famous impresario and lecture tour manager Major J. B. Pond (who had managed, among other notables, Mark Twain on the North American leg of his World Tour in 1895).<sup>443</sup> Thanks to his position, Davidson met many famous lecturers and singers of the period, among them Lieutenant Robert Peary, whose second North Pole expedition Jim eagerly joined in 1893. He also learned the fine art of "humbug." While returning from the failed expedition after nearly losing a foot to frostbite, he met a Brooklyn newspaper editor *en route* who refused to hire him as a foreign correspondent in East Asia. Undaunted, Jim left for Formosa in 1894 anyway and soon had the New York Herald and many other newspapers in the U.S., Japan, and Hong Kong receiving his dispatches in syndication. When war broke out between Chinese and Japanese troops on the island in May 1895, Jim was ready thanks to an insider's tip. But his plan to cover the war from the Chinese perspective soon reversed itself as he found himself providing vital intelligence to the Japanese side, which led to an easy Japanese takeover of Taipei. As a result, Jim Davidson received the 5<sup>th</sup> Class of the Order of the Rising Sun from the Meiji Emperor later that year – one of only a few non-Japanese citizens so honored. (The honor provided him with unprecedented deference among Japanese Rotary clubs years later.) Jim's syndicated dispatches soon caught the eye of the U.S. government and led to his appointment as a U.S. consular agent in Formosa from 1896 until 1904, commercial attaché at Shanghai in 1904, Consul at Nanking later that same year, and then Vice

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<sup>443</sup> Major J. B. Pond, *Eccentricities of Genius* (New York: G.W. Dillingham Co., 1900).



Consul and Consul at Shanghai in 1904 – 05.<sup>444</sup> During his time in Formosa, Davidson managed to research and write one of the earliest and most authoritative histories of the island of Formosa.<sup>445</sup> By the ripe age of 33, Jim Davidson had already traveled, written, and experienced more than most would in a lifetime.

But a bout with typhoid forced a return to the United States in 1906 and Jim's departure from a formal diplomatic career with the U.S. government. On his journey across the Pacific, however, Jim redeemed the time by meeting Lillian Dow. After his own recuperation at home in Minnesota and the destruction of Lillian's family's business in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, the two married and moved to Canada, settling down in Calgary in 1907. What lured them was the Calgary Colonization Company, whose investors included Jim's brother Charles. In short order, Jim found himself involved with a very different kind of syndicate from his consular days. The U.S. investors' purchase of a massive tract of land from the Canadian Pacific Railroad northeast of Calgary translated into massive profits as the company divided up and sold off the parcels of land to farmers immigrating from the United States. The Calgary Colonization Company then repeated the process with twice the acreage, resulting in other large business ventures, including the massive Crown Lumber Company managed by Jim from 1908 – 1917. But it was not until the Turner Valley oil discovery of 1913 that the Davidsons became truly wealthy through the Royalite Oil Company. With money to spare, Jim returned to his roots – entertainment and promotions – through his

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<sup>444</sup> Robert Lampard, "Making New Friends," *Alberta History*, 2004 provides a detailed summary of Davidson's biography.

<sup>445</sup> James W. Davidson, *The Island of Formosa, Past and Present* (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1903). Over 600 pages long, Jim's treatise covered the "history, people, resources, and commercial prospects" of Formosa in unprecedented detail. Oxford University Press reprinted the book in 1988.

investment in Trans-Canada Theatres. As a U.S. citizen and Calgary businessman, Jim Davidson had done quite well for himself by the time Canada entered World War I. Business operations that straddled international borders were already a very profitable game for the Davidsons as the movement of capital, immigrants, culture, and commodities into and out of Canada formed the core of the Davidsons' wealth. At the behest of his friend and theatre manager, R.J. Lydiatt, Jim signed up with the Calgary Rotary club on the eve of war.<sup>446</sup> Within a decade, Jim had become one of RI's most influential advocates for the international expansion of Rotary clubs outside of the Americas and Europe. When the 1926 annual convention in Denver agreed to a \$1 charge on each of RI's entire 120,000+ members to raise funds for international expansion, Jim Davidson and his many allies had in place all the institutional, ideological, and financial machinery necessary for "extension" into Asia.<sup>447</sup>

While collecting letters of introduction for his trip, Davidson made sure that, no matter the endorser, he was identified first and foremost as a businessman from Calgary. Of the one hundred or so letters written on behalf of Davidson by Canadian, U.S., Australian, British, French, and Dutch officials as well as by corporate officers, personal friends, religious leaders, and fellow Rotarians, only one referred to him as a (new) Canadian citizen and in only a few letters does one find any explicit reference to him as a former U.S. citizen or consular agent. According to Davidson's endorsers, his mission to Asia was not under the direction of the United States government nor of any other U.S. interests, corporate or otherwise. Rather, the Calgary businessman represented Rotary International, which was "...merely a fellowship of professional men and businessmen

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<sup>446</sup> Lampard, "Making New Friends," *Alberta History*, 2004.

<sup>447</sup> *Convention Proceedings; Twenty-First Annual International Convention*; Denver, Colorado (Chicago: Rotary International, 1926).

who are leaders in their respective ... occupations.”<sup>448</sup> Being Canadian had its advantages. But being an agent for an international, non-governmental organization had even more. Davidson’s strategy centered on presenting himself as a private businessman traveling in the name of Rotary and its higher calling of greater international cooperation and progress through civic uplift. Jim’s salesmanship had a slickness and sophistication with great potential, particularly when driven by his own personal devotion to RI’s vision of civic internationalism. He believed passionately in the gospel he preached, a businessman’s gospel that amounted to a claim of neutral status in a world of nation-states by positing a market-based identity transnational in scope and apolitical in nature. On paper, Davidson the businessman and Rotarian trumped Davidson the Canadian and/or U.S. citizen. His passport was a grey flannel suit; his business card a mission statement; his mission a sales pitch. Like his many sources of wealth, Jim was hard to pin down.

Of course, given the Davidsons’ itinerary through much of the British Empire, being British also had its advantages. In those same letters of introduction, Jim recommended that RI insert the title of Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (F.R.G.S.) after his name because “while this means nothing on this side, it gives me a little standing with the British.”<sup>449</sup> Davidson understood well that he would be in competition with the established British trading networks of Asia. He spent several weeks in London because:

It will be necessary for considerable work to be done with the oriental concerns which have their head offices in London. There is a ‘hard

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<sup>448</sup> Letter of introduction by I.B. Sutton, RI President 1928 – 29, for Davidson. 8 August 1928, JWD Papers, Vol. I, 1927 – 28 – December 1928, RI Archives.

<sup>449</sup> Davidson to Perry, 2 August 1928, JWD Papers, Vol. I, 1927-28 – December 1928. Davidson received the title F.R.G.S. in honor of his *magnus opus* on Formosa.

boiled' English trading caste at many of the points that we should go into and help from London is therefore very important.... I will commence to lay this very foundation.<sup>450</sup>

He needed all the help he could get. Some of the fiercest resistance to Davidson and his new clubs came not from Asian businessmen and professionals and their governments, but from the “‘hard boiled’ English trading caste.” Any club that opened its doors to non-British businessmen and professionals and purported to treat them as colleagues joined in civic cooperation was an inherent threat – all the more so if the club was seen as the vanguard of U.S. cultural and economic influence. The transition of imperial power even at this mundane level did not go unrecognized and without resistance. F.R.G.S. or not, Calgary businessman or not, Davidson was advancing the cultural, economic, and political reach of Rotary International, a service club based out of Chicago. And there were many British subjects in Asia who understood what that entailed.

Finally, along with establishing clubs in Asian cities, Davidson understood himself as a mediator for his middle-brow readers of the practical business implications of his experiences. There was an emerging world of international business and it was his job to drive home its import for the majority of his audience on Main Street. Sounding like any other booster from North America, he turned the tables on his North American and British readers in the midst of his travels in Southeast Asia:

If Boston or New Orleans or Liverpool were without Rotary Clubs, one can imagine the continuous efforts over many years ... to get Rotary introduced.... Yet these cities occupy in their areas no more important a place than does Singapore in Asia....

A glance at the map will show the importance of this great Asiatic center. It is the Asian half-way house between Europe and America, the gateway to the very extensive Dutch East Indies, the turning point for steamers to

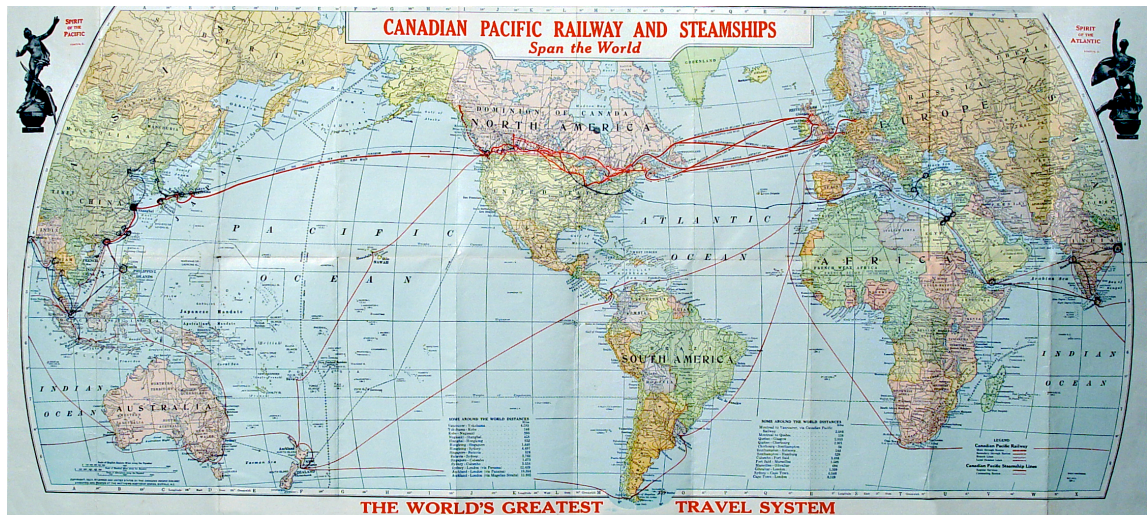
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<sup>450</sup> Davidson to Perry, 23 March 1928, JWD Papers, Vol. 1 1927-28 – December 1928.

Australasia, site of the important British Naval Base and from here boats sail to all the sea coast trading countries of the world.

I mean this literally. Eighty-eight different lines call at Singapore.... Entrances and clearances together [in 1928] totalled 97, 660 vessels. Stupendous, isn't it? Those of you who believe that all the big things are in the West, please get down your almanacs and compare this with London, Liverpool, Hamburg or New York.<sup>451</sup>

The lesson was clear. The numbers did not lie. Like it or not, the new world of business forged ahead with or without his fellow Rotarians' approval back in "home" in the Americas and Western Europe. To ignore vibrant cities like Singapore and regions like Southeast Asia was to risk falling behind progress defined by the thickening of global trade. For Wall Street as well as Main Street, for London as well as Boston, the emerging global markets were a two-edged sword of opportunity and competition. Though the role of cultural mediator for the Davidsons' travels ultimately fell on Lillian, Jim saw himself instilling a more global vision for his readers as much as his new recruits in Asia.



Source: JWD Papers; Vol. VII; "Original Reports."

<sup>451</sup> Report 23, "Klang and Singapore," 25 August 1930; JWD Papers, Vol. VII, "Original Reports."

When Jim mapped out his long itinerary before his departure, in fact, he took his own advice. He pulled out a map of the world and planned out his family's travels. Several details from his own markings on the map, however, reveal the worldview of Jim Davidson and bear some consideration. First, using black ink, he traced out a travel route from Calgary, Chicago, and New York City straight to Athens, Istanbul, and Cairo. Jim had at first imagined traveling directly from North America to the eastern Mediterranean as a function of efficient transportation. But subsequent political considerations required his travels through London and Paris in order to collect the necessary letters of introduction for travel and recruiting in the world of European empires in Asia. Second, though using an up-to-date political map of the world, Jim circled his points of destination – specific cities – in bold, black circles. Jim thought in terms of connections between cities as nodal points of trade, communication, and transportation. Since the first days in Chicago in 1905, Rotary clubs were formed in and served their own cities first and foremost. Rotary was, after all, a social movement among urban businessmen and professionals before anything else. Third, Jim's map was a generic political map placed underneath a corporate template entitled, "The Canadian Pacific Railway and Steamships Span the World." Given the wealth gleaned through his own dealings with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Jim's personal map was more than coincidence. Like Jim's own career in business, the CPR framed the entire project and provided the connective tissues between "The Spirit of the Atlantic" and "The Spirit of the Pacific." Again, like Jim Davidson, the CPR had intercontinental imaginings and profited from the movement of peoples and commodities among circuits of trade and across oceans and borders thanks to "the world's greatest travel system."<sup>452</sup> From its very inception, Jim's itinerary was a

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<sup>452</sup> One the few outside RI to receive Jim's confidential reports on his recruiting tour in Asia was

complex negotiation of inter-urban circuits of commerce, European imperial political systems, and transnational corporations. RI's ambitions of filling in the gaps between Prague and Shanghai were premised on such complex negotiations, on the machinery of a globalizing economy.

### **Istanbul and Athens – Jim's Version**

Jim Davidson was already a member of Rotary's "Foreign Extension Committee" when it developed its guidelines for future membership of the Mexico City Rotary club in 1921. (See conclusion of chapter 1 for details on the agreement.) With U.S. and British citizens so predominant among its charter members, the concern was to avoid the creation of an enclave of non-Mexican businessmen and professionals in Mexico City – a situation anathema to RI's civic internationalism. To review, the three basic pillars of that agreement were: 1) Preference for "the native Mexican" over all other future club prospects, 2) Encouragement of the use of Spanish in all club activities whenever possible, and 3) Guarantee of Mexican interests and control of the club "for the benefit of the community and nation of Mexico" rather than the creation of "an American or British Colony Club."<sup>453</sup> The agreement on the future of the Mexico City Rotary Club became a road map for clubs formed outside the Anglophone world of Rotary's origins. Of all members of the extension committee contributing to this institutional policy during the period, Davidson understood best that any hope of legitimacy for such a project hinged upon the inclusion of local "representative men." In his mind, the question was how to

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J.S. Dennis of the CPR's Department of Colonization in Montreal, Canada. Jim Davidson to Chesley Perry, November 1928; JWD Papers; Vol. VII, "Original Reports."

<sup>453</sup> "Memo of Agreement between Special Representative Arch C. Klumph and F.W. Teele, President of the Rotary Club of Mexico City"; undated, but very likely late April/ early May 1921; Mexico City Club Historical Files/Ciudad de Mexico, D.F., Mexico; RI Archives.

determine who those men were and how to bring them under one roof with the many European expatriates he typically assumed to be “representative men” as well.

Davidson, in other words, had the challenge of applying the Mexico City agreement to an unknown number of future Asian Rotary clubs. But how would the European and non-European recruits interpret and reconfigure RI’s tidy version of civic internationalism?

It did not take long for Jim to experience some disillusion in Istanbul, his first port of call:

I had a happy vision of a Rotary Club, largely Turkish but containing a few outstanding Armenians and Greeks and a smattering of pure Europeans, English and Americans, to support it and insure its success. What a great club it would have been...with the opportunity of developing a better understanding among these groups. At the same time it would have given the Turks the opportunity of a friendly world contact which they do not possess at present. But I had not been at work an hour before I learned how impossible that was.<sup>454</sup>

RI’s “happy vision,” crystallized in the Mexico City agreement, was in jeopardy within an hour of Jim’s arrival. At the same time, Jim was warned by both the British Ambassador and the Secretary of the U.S. Embassy that the new Turkish government under Kemal Ataturk would be suspicious of any club without Turkish members. He knew he had some work ahead of him. After time spent ascertaining the nature and depth of Turkey’s economic, cultural, and racial fault-lines, Jim began looking at the massive political changes in Turkey through the lens of his own experiences with the Japanese Empire after the Meiji Restoration:

Now Rotary in Constantinople...can render such a great service...in teaching the Westerner that the Turks are making a determined effort to reform and that they must work out their problems in their own way; and also that they have the right to handle their own trade without the intervention of foreign middlemen unless they find such services

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<sup>454</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports”; Report #2, “Obstacles to Rotary,” 23 October 1928.



helpful...to become a modern, enlightened, humane nation. The Japanese went through the same transition all within my lifetime. The Turks need and are entitled to the world contact that Rotary can best give them.<sup>455</sup>

Premised on “world contact” yet free from the “intervention of foreign middlemen,”

Turkey’s path to modernity had its model in East Asia and its possible mediator in RI.

After all, Jim knew intimately just how well it had all worked for the Japanese Rotarians.

But to convince the Turkish government of this view, Jim had to travel to the new capital in Ankara, where he finally coaxed a meeting with the new Minister of Interior, His Excellency Shukri Kaya Bey. Armed with his “scrapbook” filled with numerous letters of introduction from all variety of dignitaries and officials, Jim then laid out before the Minister some of RI’s publications he had translated into Turkish only days before:

“His eyes carefully searched the maps of districts in the Rotary Directory. ‘Turkey is not shown!’ he remarked... ‘We must remedy that.’” Jim knew how to harness Turkish national pride. The Minister then went over Jim’s prepared list of top Turkish prospects pieced together through various interviews and visits in Istanbul beforehand, “marking the names of those from personal knowledge he could assure me were good men.”<sup>456</sup>

With the Minister’s approval of his intentions and prospects, Jim returned to Istanbul to convene the first of many “organizing committees,” which included the Prefect of Police, the Supervisor of Education, the Superintendent of Higher Education, a college professor, a newspaper editor educated at Columbia University, a “prominent attorney,” a physician, and an importer. All were Turks strategically placed in both government and business and all were polyglots. Once persuaded by Jim’s oratory on the blessings of membership in RI, the group “then went to work in their own language in earnest, with me as a happy

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<sup>455</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports”; Report #1, 22 October 1928.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., “Turkish Report #3, part 3,” 6 November 1928.

onlooker. They wrote out a list of men they wished in, all Turks, discussed each man fully that the selection might be confined to only high class, ethical men. They discussed methods of approaching their friends.” With consensus on who to approach, the group then divided up the list and agreed to meet again the week following. Jim was concerned that “the committee wanted to start the club as a purely Turkish institution,” but “after noting their enthusiasm and considering several of them have been educated abroad, I am inclined to think that they can be quite successful without foreigners as members, though it is their intention, they say, to take in a few later which I trust they will do.” Jim took reassurance as well because “these gentlemen were all white men.”<sup>457</sup> All looked very promising for Jim’s first foray into Asia on behalf of RI. In terms of politics, class, race, and gender, the organizing committee for the Istanbul Rotary Club had passed muster. Once assembled according to Jim’s membership and institutional parameters, the Turks were free to assert any agenda and invite anyone into membership they so chose.

Confident of success in Istanbul, Jim left for Athens to do the same. Knowing the ropes, Jim stopped by the U.S. and British legations and extracted a short list of potential recruits. “First call to Theodore Petracopoulos...a wealthy man here, controlling the two leading hotels, knows the rating, financially and otherwise, of everyone, and has kept out of politics, the favorite sport of the Greeks. He was everything I could wish for.” Given his wealth and apolitical stance, Petracopolous was exactly Jim’s man in Athens. For his confidential readers within RI, Jim then broke down into “three distinct classes here [those] constituting possible club material.” His analysis became a template for his organizing activities throughout southern Asia and was easy for his readers to grasp:

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

1) “Americanized Greeks.” Jim believed some “could be useful members of a club because of their American training,” but his overall disdain for them was palpable: “It is this type of well dressed, pleasant and efficient men one sees about the hotel restaurants, and who would be glad to join a Rotary Club. They are the men who would perhaps write to International asking to start a club, and yet, they are men who would make no impression on the country, would cheapen our organization and must be guarded against.” Like the earliest clubs of the National Association of Rotary Clubs before World War I, Jim was looking to distance himself and RI as much as possible from the appearance of crass salesmanship and the hustling, fast-talking type. The Athens Rotary Club could not afford to be too “American” in its lack of social proprieties and cultural capital, no matter how genuinely Greek the members might be.

2) “Royalists... [who] compose many very charming, capable aristocrats of real influence and constitute some of the most famous names in Greece.” But this concerned Jim because “a club comprised along this element would not be representative and would, at present, be at least passively anti-government.” In short, the Royalists were the opposite of the Americanized Greeks, but with the added political burden of smoldering resentment toward the republican government under Venizelos.

3) “Venizelists or Republicans.” This group also worried Davidson, even though he believed them to be “a majority of the business and professional men and the student class,” because their predominance in the club “would evidence and rightly so, that Rotary, as far as Greece is concerned, is a political machine.”<sup>458</sup>

Jim found fault with all three classes and wondered how to carve out a Rotary club from such elements. After a detailed review of recent Greek history, politics, and culture for

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<sup>458</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports”; Report #5 “Greece,” 28 November 1928.

his RI colleagues, Jim nevertheless held out hope in organizing his club “among moderates” made up of “twenty-one names that have passed inspection by well informed men on both sides.”<sup>459</sup>

But the political rivalry between the Royalists and Republicans put Jim in a particular bind. Rotary International was supposed to transcend the political and yet affirm simultaneously whichever political regime was in place in a given city or nation. The problem had already arisen in Istanbul, leaving that club in limbo after weeks of effort. Confused by the “international” in RI’s name, the Turkish government demanded a formal statement against the U.S.S.R. for fear RI was merely a vehicle for Soviet influence in the young nation. Amused by the rarity of such a concern, Jim pointed out to Emin Ali Bey, the head of the Government Association, a passage from a pamphlet distributed by the International Service Committee of RI: “Rotary’s aim is to develop in each of its members the highest form of citizenship. A Rotarian must be a loyal citizen. Rotary has no room for the man who does not love his country. But Rotary does not feel that there is anything in loyalty to one’s country that is incompatible with developing friendship with men of other lands.” Little did Emin Ali Bey know, but Jim himself had penned those words. For Emin Ali Bey, it was an important clarification for the Istanbul Rotary club’s application to the Turkish government. For Jim, it was the only way to do business internationally and basic tenet of RI’s civic internationalism. Like Jim’s world map sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Railway, political borders were the backdrop to global trade links and “the highest form of citizenship” a simple matter of personal loyalty.

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

Jim's solution in Athens was elegant and instructive. He overcame the "Royalist-Venizelist obstacle" by first befriending "D. Petrocochino, capitalist and a very wealthy man," who was "most favorably known throughout the country" and a "Venizelist." He then persuaded Philip Dragoumis, Royalist and son and grandson of Greek prime ministers who had lost a brother to the Venizelists, to meet with Petrocochino to form the Athens Rotary club. Though potential enemies who had not spoken in years, when Dragoumis arrived, "Petrocochino arose, stepped forward and the two men smiled and shook hands and were talking in a friendly way when I left the room." The following day, Dragoumis nominated Petrocochino for club president. Other attendees at the meeting included a director for a French insurance company, the head of the newly formed Greek Tourist bureau, an electrical engineer, the director of the Dept. of Communications, and a top physician. The parallels with the Istanbul club were by design – Jim's design. Within a few weeks, the Athens Rotary club counted over 35 "Royalists" and "Venizelists." Though Jim worried that the whole project would collapse when they saw "each other's names on the paper," the club eventually took root.<sup>460</sup>

The Rotary club of Istanbul, however, did not take root so easily. The nationalist politics and bureaucratic hierarchy being so new, state approval of the Istanbul club dragged on. Also, in Jim's absence, the once-eager members of the organizing committee hedged their bets by avoiding signing their names to the club application to the state. Fear of getting themselves into something politically dangerous was very real.

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid. Lillian's version of the formation of the Athens Rotary club appeared as "Trailing Through Asia: A first-hand story of the difficulties experienced in implanting a new idea in the soil from whence sprung our first conceptions of ethical philosophy," *The Rotarian*, April 1930, 38 – 40, 53 – 55.

But two factors ended the impasse. First, Jim's success in Athens made news in Istanbul. It was one thing for RI to point to hundreds of Rotary clubs outside of North America to demonstrate its international credentials, it was quite another for Athens to have its own functioning Rotary club and Istanbul to go without. If a successful Rotary club served as a marker of political stability and modernity, so be it. It would not be the last time local and regional rivalries proved a useful dynamic to Jim and RI. Second, Jim's face-to-face contacts had their effect. After hearing of the delays by mail, Jim wrote back a letter to each member of the organizing committee: "I knew it would be difficult; but I found myself taking such a great interest in the splendid work you are doing in creating a modern and efficient Turkey, that I wanted very much to bring you into the family of Rotary International. The world should know more about your really heroic efforts.... I hope you will always consider me as a staunch friend of Turkey."<sup>461</sup> Both sentimental and affirming, the letter had a particularly strong effect on H. E. Sherif Bey, the Prefect of Police, with whom Jim had spent much personal time. Not strong in English, the Prefect had Jim's personal translator read his letter for him. The translator, Bekir Nuzhet Bey, also spent much time at Jim's side and was responsible for putting all of RI's literature that Jim carried into "modern" Turkish – no small feat in 1928. Bekir Nuzhet Bey felt obliged to write back to Jim in detail on Sherif Bey's reaction to his letter of regret and Jim, in turn, relayed the letter in all its imperfections back to RI for heuristic effect:

I swear, Mr. Davidson, he got so sorry and nearly pale on the face and told me 'this man must have left us very sorry.' Then he gave his aide for to hurry the registration of the regulations of the club which was just passing through his office.... As soon as you finish there [in Athens] you can start

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<sup>461</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, "Original Reports"; Report #7, "Athens", 12 December 1928.

here and be sure until then I will have over thirty members signed and get the meetin to attend the first lunchun.<sup>462</sup>

The personal sense of honor and shame that both the Prefect of Police and the translator felt toward the whole affair, though hardly quantifiable, proved significant in the eventual success of the Istanbul club. Nor did the leadership at RI's headquarters miss Jim's point. For his personal efforts, the Prefect eventually received special honor in *The Rotarian*, appearing in Lillian's version of events in Istanbul over two years later.<sup>463</sup> By the time the Davidsons were moving on to Cairo in January 1929, both Athens and Istanbul were under "the banner of Rotary International." More to the point, Jim had worked out the basic "method of approach" he was to repeat and hone in the coming months and years with over 2,200 other RI recruits.

### **Bridging Home and Abroad**

Though Jim's mission unleashed much commentary and fanfare within the ranks of RI, one of the most revealing insights into the value of his travels came from Leroy Vernon, head of the Washington Bureau for *The Chicago Daily News*. Having read all of Jim's internal reports, Vernon pushed for Jim to publish them in RI's monthly:

... for it is just the kind of information our people as a whole need. I can't imagine a better man for your purpose than he is, yet the handicaps and obstacles he has encountered are information worth its weight in gold to the average American business man who wants world contacts. We know they exist but Jim tells us about it in a form which anybody could understand.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, "Original Reports"; Davidson to organizing committee members in Istanbul; 20 November 1928; and Bekir Nuzhet Bey to Davidson, 9 December 1928.

<sup>463</sup> "Trailing Along Through Asia," *The Rotarian*, March 1930, 30.

<sup>464</sup> Leroy Vernon, *Chicago Daily News*, Washington Bureau, to Chesley Perry, RI Secretariat, Chicago, 22 April 1929 in JWD Papers, Volume VI, RI Archives.

Vernon knew the Davidsons for over thirty years and that both were gifted writers. He also appreciated the market value of publishing their experiences as a travelogue in the popular press.

But Vernon recognized something else in Jim's reports. Initially meant to inform RI's Board of Directors and a small circle of friends and colleagues, his reports soon took on a life of their own. Vernon understood, as a newspaperman, that the real value of Jim's reports lay in the unmet demand for such information from US, Canadian, European, and Latin American businessmen seeking "world contacts." RI was experiencing a crescendo of growth outside North America after World War I, but especially in Latin America and East Asia. With the institution developing into a clearinghouse for many urban elites outside North America eager for stable business and political relations with their regional counterparts and with the U.S., Great Britain, Japan, Germany, and other powerful nations and economic systems, RI's leadership understood the opportunities before them. Echoing its own policy on the Mexico City club in 1921, RI's Extension Committee in 1927 stated the challenge clearly enough:

If Rotary expects to advance internationally in the true sense of the word, more consideration must be given to obtaining members from the nationals in these countries in which Rotary hopes to advance. To do this we must ourselves cultivate a Mental Hospitality and a consideration and respect for the beliefs and traditions of these people. We are cognizant of the vast differences in the habits of the different people of the earth and the great difficulty that presents itself when we attempt to synchronize these people with their different attitudes towards life together under the banner of Rotary International.<sup>465</sup>

Within the year, Jim's initial experiences in and highly detailed reports on Turkey and Greece had already provided "information worth its weight in gold" for many in RI's

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<sup>465</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of the Extension Committee of Rotary International," 9 – 11 Jan 1927. File: Committee-Extension- [Minutes Book, July 1925 – Aug 1929], RI Archives.



leadership and convinced any last holdouts on the educational value of his travels, even if he failed in the actual establishment of new clubs in such foreign environs. To be sure, since the first clubs in Canada and Great Britain, it was obvious to all the establishment of Rotary clubs outside the U.S. went hand in hand with the development of new international markets. Much in tune with trends in the advertising and marketing professions after World War I, however, RI's leadership began to view greater awareness and toleration of cultural differences as the first step in honing more sophisticated messages for multiple audiences in different media markets and national cultures. Of course, the ultimate and unquestioned goal of such tolerance was "to synchronize these people with their different attitudes...under the banner of Rotary International." The question was how to harness Jim's travels for the rank and file.

By the late 1920s, these internal developments began seeping into the pages of *The Rotarian* as more and more non-U.S. and non-Anglo authors received significant attention through feature articles. For example, immediately after the first installment of Lillian's series "Trailing Through Asia" was a contribution by Carlo Bos, Commissioner in the Chinese Maritime Customs and president of the Shanghai Rotary Club.<sup>466</sup> Lillian's and Bos's articles underscored a critical departure in RI's editorial policy as well as a new dimension in RI's vision of international engagement. Together, Jim and Lillian were becoming the eyes and ears of RI's readers as well as its leadership. Lillian could weave into Jim's laconic, war-correspondent style of writing her own detailed observations of the style of women's dress, the way children played their games, the

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<sup>466</sup> Carlo Bos, "The Myth of Western Supremacy: Reaction of Asiatic Races to the Impact of the West," *The Rotarian*, February 1930, 16 – 18, 61 – 64. Bos also had a feature article the month prior entitled, "Blind Patriotism and National Madness," *The Rotarian*, January 1930, 10 – 12, 60 – 64.

manner of negotiating in the marketplace as a woman, the intricacies of dance and customs, the nuances of certain non-English words, the history and architecture of towns and cities, and so on with each new culture they encountered.<sup>467</sup>

The mixture of styles had its effect. Lillian's eye for the anthropological and Jim's crisp, no-nonsense descriptions of interactions with the "local businessmen" appealed to Rotarians **and** their wives. Much more than an evolving brand of internationalism was unfolding within RI and its monthly during the period. As with popular culture in general, more and more advertisements targeting the female reader/consumer began coming in by the mid-1920s. It was soon apparent that RI's restriction of club membership to men only did not extend to its magazine's readership.<sup>468</sup> Though most readers still lived in North America, in other words, its audience was not easily defined by gender or even age since each club member typically had a home subscription and many clubs provided free copies to local schools and public libraries. With a readership greater than its membership, *The Rotarian* was emerging as a mainstream magazine. As a result, Alex Potter, head of the European Secretariat in Zurich from 1925 – 1930 and manager of RI's Extension Division in the Chicago headquarters after 1930, made sure the Davidsons appreciated just how their exploits were being received on the whole in North America and Europe:

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<sup>467</sup> Jim understood the predicament of the editorial board at *The Rotarian* well: "What a problem "The Rotarian" must be. It has in reality to be the magazine for American Rotarians who give it 90% of its support, and yet, we all want it to serve these overseas Rotarians as well..." James Davidson to Chesley Perry, 4 August 1930, "Re Rotarian," JWD Papers; Vol. IV; July 1930 – March 1931.

<sup>468</sup> The editorial board of *The Rotarian*, in fact, embraced female readers as it helped guarantee a circulation greater than 100,000 – the minimum necessary to attract national advertisers. "Handbook for the Annual Meeting of the Council of Rotary International", August 1924, Third Day Session, 52 – 60, Guy Gundaker Papers, RI Archives.

Really, Jim you can't imagine the romance Rotarians find in the work you are doing. I find that in contacting with different clubs and in writing them inspirational letters, it stirs up their enthusiasm and develops their imagination when I tell them about the work you have done and are doing, and about the clubs you have organized and of the manner in which you have enabled peoples of those Eastern countries to cooperate – to serve for the welfare of their professions, their communities and the world at large.<sup>469</sup>

On a more personal and concrete level, Chesley Perry informed the Davidsons of:

Isaiah Hale, Safety Superintendent of the Santa Fe Railroad at Topeka, Kansas, [who] joined the Rotary club and his first task was to read 'The Rotarian'. He sent me his criticism of the magazine, said he was very glad to join the organization because of its fellowship, but when he read the Davidson articles he saw the importance of the organization from the standpoint of world wide relationships and then he became proud of his membership and realized there was more to it than a social luncheon each week. He went back through the files of the magazine which he obtained from a friend and read the entire Davidson series.<sup>470</sup>

Though we cannot quantify the effect of Lillian's articles during their three-year run, the editors of the magazine frequently received similar comments from Rotarians like Isaiah Hale not just from Kansas or North America but from around the world. The editors knew that Lillian's coverage of Jim's "mission" was developing quite a following – and helping attract and keep female readers and national advertisers.<sup>471</sup> And so her monthly installments continued with full support from RI.

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<sup>469</sup> Alex O. Potter to James W. Davidson, 14 March 1930. JWD Papers; Vol. III; October 1929 – 30 June 1930.

<sup>470</sup> Chesley Perry to James Davidson, 22 April 1931. JWD Papers; Vol. V; 27 March 1931 – 14 November 1931.

<sup>471</sup> In fact, a full page advertisement in the same February issue, entitled "You and Co.," served up a lesson on the importance of advertising as "organized guidance" and "help of the most practical kind" for one's daily life. The ad went on, arguing that "when you turn to the advertisements in this magazine you call on safe and expert buying counsel" since "they make it easy for you to be an expert purchasing agent for your family corporation." The subordination of family life and identities to the benevolent tutelage of advertising highlighted the editorial and institutional priorities set by Rotary from its earliest publications in 1912 – 13. The rise of advertising as a profession fit hand in glove with the growth and success of RI and modern forms of corporate capitalism. *The Rotarian*, February 1930, 52.

## Turkey and Egypt – Lillian’s Version

Lillian’s first two installments covered the emergence of Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Like Jim, she interpreted the transition in light of Japanese history, but in her own distinct and compelling style:

Never have I seen anything more entrancingly beautiful than the skyline of Constantinople as we approached.... The dying rays of a lovely, rosy sunset had given place to a deep purplish blue, which like a color wash, covered both city and sky. In my gallery of memory-pictures this, my first great Near Eastern city, will ever reveal itself as I saw it then – a symphony in blue, with innumerable ethereal minarets soaring skyward above the rounding massive domes of mosques; and fairy-tale-like white palaces lining the shore; an indelible ‘memory gift’ as the Japanese say.<sup>472</sup>

From the start, Lillian’s writing style was hardly that of a no-nonsense businessman in search of new market opportunities. Theirs was a bold adventure into Asia and her articles an invitation to join them. Though laced with obvious orientalist tones throughout, Lillian’s treatment of Istanbul and Turkish society also offered maps, photos, political history, and geographical information as well as amusing and detailed descriptions of the street vendors and school children “enjoy[ing] the unusual treat of their first snowfall.”

Lillian continued to blur gendered forms of knowledge – “practical” information on business conditions with romantic asides on cultural differences – into an entertaining whole in her second installment. In reviewing the “many important and desirable reforms” unleashed by Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, she focused on the removal of the traditional fez in public and replacement of the Arabic script with the Roman alphabet.

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<sup>472</sup> *The Rotarian*, February 1930, 14.

But her regard for Kemal, “impulsive, youthful, democratic, not born in the purple,” radiated when considering the social changes experienced by Turkish women:

The new Turkish woman is intelligent, keenly progressive and knows how to dress smartly. Hats are not often seen but as a substitute the veil with which they formerly covered their faces, is now wrapped, in the cleverest way, snugly about the head, forming a pretty turban....<sup>473</sup>

Rapid changes in dress and public codes of behavior for Turkish women were the real markers of modernity for Lillian. Unlike Turkish men, however, “there was this difference: the men were forced by law to change, but the women acted on their own initiative.”<sup>474</sup> According to Lillian, Turkish women were important agents for Turkish reform and modernity. To drive the point home, an image of a “modern” Turkish woman appeared opposite the respectable portrait of the Prefect of the Police with the caption: “Gone are the veils and muffling garments of the days of the Seraglio. Chic and stylish, the modern Turkish girl dresses as smartly as her sisters in Paris.” For Lillian, the temporal ruptures of Turkish modernity found their deepest expression in the replacement of “ancient costumes” with women’s new clothing and codes of behavior. Turkish women also demonstrated their nation’s newfound continuities with the West: “They parade the streets, go to the movies, dance at the cabarets, and do generally as girls do in Western countries anywhere.... In the bookstores one finds them interested in the fashion magazines. Many of them design and make their own gowns and they dress in exceptionally good taste and look much as our girls do at home.”<sup>475</sup> Though Lillian herself mixed up gender barriers in her reportage, the modern women of Turkey followed gendered patterns of consumerism right up to the latest skirt lengths. According to

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<sup>473</sup> *The Rotarian*, March 1930, 31.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

Lillian, the future looked good for Turkey because the women of Turkey now looked good. For “our girls...at home” daily living out the same message in a blizzard of advertising, Lillian’s point would have made complete sense.

But new dress codes did not translate into new gender relations within the intimate social space of the Rotary club. Word of mouth had spread so well in Istanbul thanks to “the Turkish press” that Turkish women, Jim reported, “have spoken to Mrs. Davidson as though it were an assured thing.” Though Jim was looking for all the help he could get, he got more than he bargained for. Turkish women had approached Lillian personally and “spoken enthusiastically about [Rotary] and in each case wanted to know why ladies [were] not included.”<sup>476</sup> A graduate of the University of California and well-traveled woman herself, Lillian probably embodied the promises of modernity to the wives of Jim’s many recruits in Istanbul in more than just her style of clothing. But RI’s civic internationalism did not entail gender equality any more in Istanbul than it did in Chicago or London. In fact, for all its international growth over the course of the twentieth century, RI managed to enforce the gender barrier well into the 1980s.<sup>477</sup>

Women in Egypt represented something very different for Lillian. Setting the stage for her next two installments on Egypt, she opened her description of the Davidsons’ stay in Cairo in a sardonic tone:

If the heroine goes abroad, it is quite the thing in all up-to-date novels, to include Shephard’s Hotel in her travels; invariably, at some stage in the

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<sup>476</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. II, “Original Reports,” Report #4 18 November 1928.

<sup>477</sup> Note on California club in 1970s, U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1987, RI’s changes in 1989, and women’s growing presence in RI in US since then. See also Alan M. Wolf, “Gearing Up for Growth, Rotary Woos Women, Targets Finances,” *Crain’s Chicago Business*, 9 September 1996, 26 on RI’s recognition of women members as a significant area of growth and membership dues. By the mid-1990s, women comprised about 20% of RI’s overall membership.

plot, she is on its famous terrace where one can sit in comfort and gaze down upon the changing, captivating street life of Cairo.<sup>478</sup>

Despite her own orientalist approach to Egypt, Lillian showed some awareness of Europeans' ancient use of "The East" as a backdrop for its own imaginings. As if to undermine her own irony, however, she explained how Egyptian women bore their families' wealth in the form of jewelry carried on their bodies and then offered as evidence an image of a young woman wearing "the *yashmak* that partly conceal[s] the beauty of Egyptian women."<sup>479</sup> As a counterpoint to Lillian's presentation of "modern" Turkish women, the intent was clear: Egypt was no Turkey.

No irony was meant when Lillian revealed the Shepherd Hotel's other use as a backdrop for western audiences: it was now the official site for the weekly meeting of the new Rotary Club of Cairo. But the men of Cairo had not embraced modern ways of doing business any more than the women had modern ways of dress. Quoting directly from Jim's confidential reports, Lillian laid out for her readers a challenge seen as even greater than Athens and Istanbul:

The Egyptians have had little experience with organizations such as Rotary – the whole idea is naturally quite new to them. It was doubtful if an all-Egyptian club would function with any degree of success even if it were possible to interest Egyptians into giving it a trial. The logical, in fact, only solution was to organize if possible a club among leading Europeans in Cairo and then to bring in outstanding Egyptians with the hope that later the latter would use their influence in spreading Rotary to the more purely Egyptian communities. The Cairo club, therefore, had to be largely British or international in its membership.<sup>480</sup>

What happened to the principles worked out in Mexico City? Lillian explained, in Jim's voice, how "throughout the East" the business and professional communities of each city

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<sup>478</sup> "Trailing Through Asia," *The Rotarian*, May 1930, 34.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

remained divided up into “exclusive nationalistic groups” that had “their own social clubs, their own trade associations and their own schools.”<sup>481</sup> Given the chaos and fragmentation in the social and business environment of Cairo, Jim focused on British expatriates first and hoped they would act as a core for later inclusion of Egyptians and others.

How and why Jim chose to work through the British in Cairo revealed much about the practical inner-workings of RI’s civic internationalism and its close reliance on pre-existing European imperial structures and practices for its own expansion. A year before the Davidsons’ arrival in Cairo, British Rotarians had already been vectoring in on Cairo’s business community through their own networks and independent of RI’s Chicago offices. While visiting London on business, W. R. Todd, manager of the Cairo office for Thomas Cook and Son, met top London Rotarians through a fellow manager in Cook’s London office. Todd returned to Cairo tasked with making “a survey” of Cairo in anticipation of starting a club there. Later effort came from another active London Rotarian of great wealth, Sam Gluckstein, managing director of J. Lyons & Co., who traveled on his own to Cairo for the express purpose of establishing a new club. After addressing the British Chamber of Commerce and interviewing various potential recruits throughout the city, Gluckstein met with no success apart from one devoted convert: R. Clare Martin, “manager for the Shell Oil Company’s large interests in Egypt and adjoining countries.” Put in contact with each other through London Rotarians, Martin and Todd began holding weekly luncheons in hopes that a club might take off on its own, but to no avail. When the Davidsons joined them later that fall, they had sixteen men “representing eight different nationalities” gathered for their formal organizing meeting,

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.



and their sights set on six more “most desirable members..., including Sir Abdel Hamid Soliman Pasah, a prominent Egyptian official” and Minister of Communications for the Egyptian government. With Martin as the Cairo club’s first president and Todd its first secretary, the Cairo “membership was of the highest type and the success of Rotary in Egypt became thus assured.” The club soon had over 35 members from 14 different “nationalities.” To be sure, London, not Chicago, had everything to do with the establishment of the Cairo Rotary club.

But more important was the dovetailing of British corporate and imperial networks in the creation of the club as a regional epicenter for RI’s expansion. As crucial links in the transportation and communication networks of the British Empire, Cairo and the Suez Canal were natural centers of operation for both Thomas Cook, the premiere international travel agency of the period, and transnational corporations like Shell Oil, which was already exploiting the vast oil reserves of the Middle East. Martin and Todd, Cairo’s top Rotarians in 1929, were not just local businessmen. They were key actors in an emerging global economy as well as loyal British subjects. Their careers hinged on intimate knowledge of British trade routes and imperial policies. For RI, they were ideal for converting Cairo into a hub for Rotary, with plans for spokes extending into Egypt at Alexandria, Suez, Port Said, Mansura, Assuit, Aswan, and Luxor; into British Palestine at Jerusalem and Baghdad; and into Syria at Damascus and Beirut.<sup>482</sup> Moreover, Lillian artfully edited out of Jim’s report his concerns over British disdain for the encroachments of U.S. corporate interests: “Just at present owing to the rapid development of the United States in its export business, there is a tendency on the part of other foreigners to unite in

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<sup>482</sup> “Trailing Through Asia,” *The Rotarian*, June 1930, 62 – 63 and JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #9, 22 January 1929.

a campaign against Americans and American goods. In my day Great Britain was a favorite foe on which to concentrate.” With Todd and Martin at the Cairo club’s helm, anti-American sentiment was diminished. Yet Jim quietly went one step further: “The political situation is such that of all nationalities the British should have control [of Rotary clubs in Egypt]. Their hold on the government, however, is slight, and as they are exceeded in numbers by several other nationalities, it would seem not only right but desirable that the Egyptian Clubs be international.” RI’s civic internationalism softened anti-American attitudes, especially among British businessmen, without whom Rotary had no hope of success in the entire region. It was pure strategy. From one perspective, it was rather fortuitous for RI that the London Rotarians were on the vanguard of expansion into Cairo. From another, it was exactly as it should be. RI’s co-opting of pre-existing British imperial networks required only that RI avoid any direct challenge of British hegemony in the region and instead trumpet RI’s internationalist (i.e., not necessarily American and certainly pro-British) agenda in all its publications and pronouncements.

Both Jim and Lillian rose to the occasion. Not only did they avoid any questioning of British hegemony, they actively supported it. Lillian left no doubt in her readers’ minds of the benevolence of British rule. Citing Jim’s notes, she reviewed recent political history of Egypt as it moved toward independence after 1914, summarized the basic elements of the British Protectorate, and then offered up a spirited defense of the British Empire:

The part played in the past by Britain in the administration of Egyptian affairs has been of incalculable benefit to the country. The British took over Egypt, a bankrupt nation. They placed it on its feet and in 1922 turned the government over to the Egyptians financially sound and with a surplus. They added tens of thousands of acres of arable land by the building of dams and extension of irrigation. They gave Egypt a degree

off prosperity that had not been known before. They introduced sanitation, established modern hospitals, extended education and brought law and order to all parts of the land. They placed Egypt among the most advanced of Eastern nations and all these services they rendered without material advantage to themselves.<sup>483</sup>

Though she attributed the lines to Jim, they never appeared in that exact form in his reports. Lillian's writing certainly reflected Jim's own views. But Jim's version drew parallels between the British Protectorate in Egypt and the U.S. control of Cuba:

"[Britain] is now merely a looker-on, playing much the same role as does the United States in Cuba." For Jim, the apologetics of British imperialism transferred with ease to U.S.-Cuban relations. Did they apply to U.S. foreign relations in general? Was the United States an imperial power akin to Great Britain after all? Lillian did not seem to think so. Shorn of any reference to U.S. imperialism, Jim's apologetics for British imperialism became a more palatable discourse on civilizational uplift in far-off lands, the noble work of European powers in Asian lands rather than the site of U.S. cultural and economic encroachments in cooperation with those European imperial powers.

In the end, the establishment of the Cairo Rotary club "under British control" shadowed the racial logic of British imperialism in Egypt. The syllogism applied in both because the premises were identical: A) the Egyptians as a race or "nationality" still lacked the capacity for self-government, B) they could only learn the skills of self-government through the tutelage of a more developed/modern/civilized political and economic power, C) therefore, the Egyptians were in need of a continuation of the British Protectorate just as the Cairo Rotary club (and all other Rotary clubs established in Egypt) required a guiding hand from its "international" members for the indefinite future.

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<sup>483</sup> "Trailing Through Asia: Being an account of a side trip into Egypt to establish a common ground in Rotary upon which members of diverse nationalistic groups may meet in fellowship," *The Rotarian*, May 1930, 63.

Like club membership, citizenship had its criteria in terms of class, race, and gender. Jim was clear on this point:

I am convinced that it would be dangerous to start any club in Egypt without a strong foundation of foreign members unless we were willing to gamble on a failure. An International Club can be conducted here in an efficient and interesting way which would appeal far more to a native than an exclusively Egyptian organization. So constituted, Egyptians even could be found who would serve well as officers and on the board of directors with the exception of the position of Secretary which should always be held by a foreigner. Such a club might eventually have a majority of Egyptian members and render a real service....the officers of that club are alive to their responsibilities in regard to taking in Egyptian members as rapidly as they can interest the right type.<sup>484</sup>

But, as always, what Jim meant by “the right type” was crucial. The club door was open for Egyptian members, so long as they met RI’s formal standards on classifications for membership and could grasp the higher purposes of civic cooperation and uplift – as defined by the consent of ALL the “international” members of the Cairo club. As in Athens and Istanbul, Jim worked out new components of his “method of approach.” After his time in Cairo, he would as a rule work through pre-established structures and practices of the British Empire by seeking out the most elite British businessmen and professionals first as the nucleus of new clubs and then draw in “native” recruits as they managed to fulfill the membership criteria of the British as well as RI.

The Cairo Rotary club was a very complex outpost of U.S. cultural and economic influence embedded within pre-existing British imperial networks. In this dual capacity, it also served as an institutional gatekeeper for rising Egyptian elites. The rules of entry and social interaction, however, were defined ultimately by a private, non-state actor based out of Chicago rather than British colonial policies. Yet, with so many charming anecdotes to tell from their trip to the *Muski*, “Cairo’s world-famous native bazaar,” and a

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<sup>484</sup> JWD Papers; “Original Reports,” Report #9, 22 January 1929.

“side-trip” to see the pyramids, Lillian managed to keep such deliberations out of the pages of *The Rotarian*. Tales of romance and adventure served as euphemisms of imperial power – both U.S. and British.

### **The Middle East – the Davidsons’ Version**

Over the spring and summer of 1930, Lillian continued with her coverage of the Davidsons’ travels from Cairo to Jerusalem, then to Damascus and Baghdad by “motor-bus,” and finally arriving in Bombay, India for work in the Indian Subcontinent. In all three cities, Jim ran into significant problems. The Jerusalem Rotary club eventually came to fruition, but only by following the “method of approach” used in Cairo and Egypt and gathering “a strong British foundation in order to be influential and efficient.” The greater concern lay in RI’s “10% rule” on club membership: No club could draw more than 10% of its membership from any “major classification” such as “medicine,” “government service,” “advertising,” etc. Devised in the United States before World War I in order to prevent domination of clubs by any particular industry or profession, the 10% rule had become a significant obstacle for Jim in Jerusalem because most of the “representative men” of the community were “government officials” within the British colonial administration. Jim began questioning the rigidity of RI’s rules on classification by asking “perhaps we should ask ourselves which is of the greater importance, that Rotary spread the spirit of service into every country or that we conform strictly with a rule which came into existence without consideration of some of the problems that I have encountered.”<sup>485</sup> Flirting with RI’s membership criteria in such a fundamental way was not anticipated by Davidson any more than with the directors of RI. They all viewed “the

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<sup>485</sup> JWD Papers, Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #10, 11 February 1929.

classification principle” as basic to their organization’s *raison d’etre* as their civic activities, as a kind of stable measuring rod for business and professional identities no matter the political and cultural circumstances. But, given Jim’s full embrace of “this very excellent and liberal arrangement” provided by the British Mandate which had “brought justice and security,” the rules had to be stretched or “the strong British foundation” would not be possible.<sup>486</sup> The white Europeans had to be included despite the rules or else Jerusalem go without a club altogether. Jim fudged the rules and the British government officials exceeded the 10% cap. Jerusalem was only the beginning of Jim’s adaptations of RI’s membership criteria.<sup>487</sup>

After visiting both Damascus and Baghdad, however, Jim believed those cities beyond any possibility of sustaining a club. “With the British as masters in Iraq and with Baghdad, a city of 250,000 people and the most important point over that large part of Asia extending from Palestine to India, it seemed to me important to take at least a look in.”<sup>488</sup> Geography and the British Empire drew Jim to Baghdad, where he found that, unlike Istanbul or Athens, there was a minimum of political resistance or rivalry. Instead, the problem, Jim explained, was “the lack of permanency in the British occupation and the difficulties of transportation.”<sup>489</sup> In other words, the reasons why Jim went to Baghdad were the same reasons why he chose not to organize a Rotary club. With the British Mandate due to end in 1932 and with transportation routes to and from Baghdad so erratic, Jim could not imagine any future success for a Baghdad club. Such was Jim’s dependence on the political and economic infrastructure of the British Empire in Asia.

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Quoted by Lillian in “Baghdad and the Desert Call,” *The Rotarian*, October 1930, 28.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

Further trips to “the Persian cities of Mohammerah and Abadan, headquarters of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company” also failed to produce results for Jim. Unless he were to detail bloody French suppression of Syrian resistance in Damascus, long bus rides with officials of the Anglo-Persian Oil company, or conversations with German scientists prospecting for oil, there was not a whole lot to write home about in this leg of their journey.<sup>490</sup>

Fortunately, Lillian managed to fill in the gaps for her readers back home. Redacting Jim’s encyclopedic knowledge of Iraq’s recent emergence from the Ottoman Empire and reiterating the benevolence of British rule could only go so far. Lillian turned to familiar tropes to spice up her narrative:

Baghdad! You who have even a drop of adventurer’s blood in your veins will thrill to that name. Get out your atlas, and put your finger on the spot. Baghdad today is almost as isolated as when inspired by Scheherazade, with the ‘Thousand and One Tales’ as her dice, gambled there with death....<sup>491</sup>

But the romanticizing had its limits as well. Lillian’s second installment on their time in Baghdad stepped back from its orientalism and instead presented a tense, strained political environment ready to irrupt during their touring of Baghdad’s ancient sites. She and her daughter Marjory hired “an Arab girl” educated at the American University in Beirut and “dressed smartly in European clothes” as their tour guide. Their visit to “Kadhimain...one of the three holy cities in Iraq, venerated by Mohammedans of the Shiah sect” revealed a deeper form of resistance than anything experienced beforehand:

At the close of day, the open square before the great Mosque was filled with Moslems. It was our intention to go just a bit nearer to see the golden

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<sup>490</sup> JWD Papers, Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #11, 14 March 1930.

<sup>491</sup> “We Motor to Baghdad: Arabian Nights are not what they used to be. The ‘Magic-Carpet’ is out-moded by airplanes and automobiles crossing the desert with time-table regularity,” *The Rotarian*, September 1930, 36.

domes surmounting gaudy green, blue and yellow tiled walls, but after a half dozen steps the grim crowd of devotees began closing in upon us step by step. One fleeting glance into those fanatical faces and prudence whispered, 'Go back.'<sup>492</sup>

Lillian did not offer any counsel or explanation on the moment for her readers, only that she, her daughter, and her guide in western dress were dangerously out of place. After touring several other cities in Iraq, the Davidsons caught a British coastal steamer from Basra to Bombay. In the end, Jim had no success between Jerusalem and Bombay. Given his reliance on the British Empire in the region and its relative weakness in Iraq, there was little hope of any other outcome. Lillian, for her part, fared much better with her three dispatches home on the history, cultures, peoples of the Middle East.

### **Bombay vs. Calcutta – Jim's Version**

While passing through on a business trip in the U.S. in 1918, R. J. Coombes, an Englishman, visited the Rotary Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan. So impressed with what he had seen, he returned to Calcutta and within the year had started his own version of the Calcutta Rotary club. Much stricter in its application of the classification principle, somewhat closer to a Freemason lodge than any other Rotary club, and comprised of British subjects entirely, the Calcutta Rotary club nevertheless began meeting at Peliti's Restaurant in the fall of 1919, becoming only the third club in all of Asia, just after Shanghai and Manila.<sup>493</sup> By 1921, however, the club began to include Indian members

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<sup>492</sup> "Baghdad and the Desert Call," *The Rotarian*, October 1930, 28 – 29.

<sup>493</sup> Forward, *A Century of Service*, 85 – 86. The relationship between RI and Freemasonry is very difficult to pin down since most of RI's records from club to district to international levels usually do not indicate who was and was not a Freemason. RI's founder, Paul Harris, for example, was emphatically not a Freemason his entire life whereas Chesley Perry, RI's longtime General



and, over the course of the 1920s, slowly came more into alignment with formal institutional policies and practices of RI. Despite almost complete isolation from the rest of RI, the club even managed to start another club in Lahore by 1927.<sup>494</sup> But it was not until Jim's visit to the Indian subcontinent that the Calcutta and Lahore clubs were truly incorporated into RI. Jim had even more changes in mind.

The Calcutta club presented Jim with one significant problem that he sought to rectify the moment he stepped off the steamer in Bombay. Though the Calcutta club's close relations with British colonialism were certainly no issue, the club was "made up almost entirely of the middle class." For Jim, the future success of RI in India hinged on a specific kind of relationship with British and Indian elites: "The type of men I have interested are such that extension in other cities in India will be made easy. Many of the members are heads of firms having branches in practically every city that we would be entering." The middle class status of the Calcutta club, as such, undermined Jim's top-down recruiting strategies throughout Asia, let alone India. Though he reported that "it is a good and useful club even at that," the club's middling reputation obstructed his

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Secretary was a reasonably active Freemason in Chicago. The overlap in membership, to be sure, would have been much more probable in parts of Asia under the British Empire. But the institutions were very distinct on their own terms and occupied distinct roles vis-à-vis the British Empire. The most significant differences between the two organizations would have been clear to any potential British recruit in the British Empire: Rotary clubs did not have lodges; met in hotels, restaurants, and any other local forum that was most convenient; did not have significant membership fees; held meetings in public, often with local press coverage; regularly mounted a variety of civic projects for local causes; had no particular relationship to the U.S., British, or any other military establishment; and engaged in quasi-nationalistic, public spectacle rather than secretive, quasi-mystical ritual understood only by its own membership. In sum, these were significant institutional differences compounded by RI's particular emphasis on inclusion of local elites as soon as possible, no matter how great its initial dependence on British recruits at each club's formation during the interwar years. For a significant treatment of Freemasonry and the British Empire, see Jessica L. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717 – 1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>494</sup> Forward, *A Century of Progress*, 86. See also "The First Five Years of the Rotary Club of Calcutta," <http://www.rotaryfirst100.org/global/asia/clubs/03firstfive.htm>, published by the Rotary Global History Fellowship.

“method of approach” in Bombay: “There are a number of knights holding the highest positions in Calcutta but none of them are in the club.”<sup>495</sup> Jim saw his challenge in plain terms:

I had two alternatives. I could organize a club among men of the second strata with retailers and small wholesalers as members.... The summer problem would not be such a difficult one with them.... Such a club would be very little help to us in extension work. The other alternative...was to go after the outstanding men whose names would mean much through India and would therefore be of much assistance in spreading Rotary.<sup>496</sup>

In the end, Jim managed to sign up in Bombay, among others, “four English knights, all of them most important men” since “future extension in India...demands at least one club of this type.”<sup>497</sup> Jim never considered the first alternative.

Compounding the issue of class status, however, was “the summer problem” when “most of the successful men go either home to England or to the hill stations for the hot season,” leaving their firms “in the hands of juniors.” Given RI’s requirement that ALL clubs hold weekly meetings year round with a minimum percentage of members in attendance, Jim was in a quandary. If the true commercial elites of Bombay, Madras, Dehli, Lahore, and other key Indian cities were to constitute those cities’ Rotary clubs, what would come of RI’s own institutional demands and time commitments? Without any chance to consult RI’s international service committee members scattered throughout the Americas and Europe, Jim reasoned on his own that class status trumped attendance rules because “a great deal can be done with men after they have become interested in Rotary that cannot be done when they are just coming in. I am speaking now of clubs in India, Ceylon, Hong Kong, etc. where the membership will be British.” Since the new

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<sup>495</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #11, 14 March 1929.

<sup>496</sup> JWD Papers, Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #12, April 1929.

<sup>497</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #11, 14 March 1929.

clubs, in the long term, would be managed by local elites who “submit to the heat more willingly and would not demand a vacation,” the “summer problem” would eventually fade.<sup>498</sup> RI’s model for growth turned on the high status of its membership much more than on adherence to RI’s set practices. Thanks to Jim, RI not only drew freely from pre-existing British imperial infrastructure in Asia, but from its class structures as well. As in Cairo, the hub-and-spoke model of expansion into India depended on borrowed status from Bombay’s elites rather than Calcutta’s “smaller merchant and less important man.”<sup>499</sup>

But the “summer problem” and class issues were not the end of Jim’s challenges. The charter members of the Madras Rotary club, for example, included three “of the aristocratic type of Eastern merchant which ordinarily maintains a caste distinction which excludes the retailer from their homes and clubs.”<sup>500</sup> Yet retailers and the advertising professions were part and parcel to RI’s success in North America and Great Britain. Jim understood that their influence in RI could be mitigated only so much by distance. As a result, Jim orchestrated the merger of older class and caste structures of Madras with the consumerist ethos of corporate capitalism in the U.S. through inclusion of “four leading retail establishments” since “most of the retail trade [was] in the hands of merchants of little responsibility and standing.” Retailers, those from the highest corporate levels at least, could sit down for weekly luncheons with the “aristocratic type of Eastern merchant” – under the banner of Rotary International, of course. Among the 25 others

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<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #14, Ootacamund, India, 30 May 1929. See also JWD Papers; Vol. II.; January 1929 – October 1929; James Davidson to Chesley Perry, 9 March 1929, where Jim lists his “most important problems” in India: “The chief ones are Indian membership, retail members, and summer meetings.”

dining together under RI's banner at the Connemara Hotel in 1929 were G.G. Armstrong, Chairman of the Madras Port Trust; F. E. James, Representative of the United Planters Association of South India; W. H. Luker, Director of Addison & Co.; Morton Chance, Hotel Chain Manager; J.W. Macfarlane, Manager of the South India Export Co.; K. Kay, Managing Director of Binney & Co., "a key shipping concern"; and M.A. Candeth, listed as "an Indian" and one of the club's directors.<sup>501</sup> Upon the Davidsons' departure for Ceylon, Jim designated F. E. James his "special commissioner" for India's five clubs in Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore, Madras, and Dehli. In the wake of Jim's organizing, F. E. James and then several Indian "district governors" did well for themselves. By 1947, the year of India's formal independence from Great Britain, there were 71 Rotary clubs encompassing over 3,100 members throughout all of India. After some "sluggish" postwar growth in the 1950s and 60s, the Indian clubs began growing rapidly in the 1970s after separation between India and Pakistan and particularly so from the late 1980s to the present.<sup>502</sup> Though Jim's vision of RI's growth in India largely played out according to design with time, it was "the second strata" of retailers and wholesalers in Calcutta who got the last laugh as one of Jim's point men in the Calcutta club, Nitish Laharry, went on to become RI's first international president from Asia in 1962 – 63, overseeing 529,000 Rotarians in 11,300 clubs in 128 countries.<sup>503</sup> Not bad for India's "middle class" club.

But the greatest hurdle for success in India was the emerging politics of Indian nationalism. For an international service club defining itself as an apolitical force for

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<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> By 2000, Rotary clubs in India numbered For the best source of reliable information on such statistics, see: <http://www.rotaryfirst100.org/global/regions/india.htm>

<sup>503</sup> Forward, *A Century of Service*, 310.

civic cooperation among business and professional elites yet building its own membership on the basis of British imperial networks, demands for “Home Rule” were the greatest of threats. In his survey of Indian politics, Jim rightly perceived growing Indian resentment toward the British Empire and surging Indian nationalism. Couched within an apologetics of British imperialism even more pronounced than in Egypt, Jim reviewed the activities of Gandhi and calls for “Indianization” in dismissive tones redolent of the Cubans’ “debt of gratitude” toward the United States for all it was and might become as an “independent nation.” Jim painted a bleak picture in his report:

Have not the British the obligations to maintain the blessings of good government even in the face of the opposition of the Indian politicians and the masses whom the so-called patriarch has misled? I think we all recognize that a people have a right to govern themselves even though they do it somewhat badly. In this case, however, it does not mean merely inefficient administration, but does mean the introduction of internecine warfare between the various religious groups, oppression and extortion with the minorities as the principal sufferers and a return of many of the evils that the British did away with when they came in to India.<sup>504</sup>

Jim buttressed his argument with a learned summary of India’s religious, linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity, but the fundamental logic of imperialism finally revealed itself in his conclusion:

Of course, with their large vested interests and for other obvious reasons, the British have no intention of withdrawing from India. Doubtless they will compromise and endeavor in this way to avoid conflict with the Indian people. Perhaps sufficient wise heads among the Indians will finally appreciate how well off they are and convince their fellow-men that they need the British both for security and for business reasons. Meanwhile, however, a storm is in the offing.<sup>505</sup>

Empire was shorthand for massive investments and the right of return on those investments. That the Indians were so at loggerheads in so many ways not only proved

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<sup>504</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #11, 14 March 1929.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

their lack of self-governing capacities, but also justified their continuing need for British tutelage.<sup>506</sup> Poor citizenship skills mapped onto racial categories drove Jim's imperial apologetics in general as well as his "method of approach" in organizing Rotary clubs in India. Though RI's civic internationalism made no reference to such racial categories in its formal policies on club membership, though the Mexico City agreement committed RI to the affirmation of local and national interests of each host city in RI, race emerged in response to political assertions of Indian nationalism:

I have interviewed all of the British members on the subject of taking in Indian members and with one exception, they were all in favor of it. They were fearful, however, that men might be selected who were disloyal to the government in thought and might later declare themselves publicly, and thus prove to be most undesirable. If they endeavored to remove the objectionable party on the basis of disloyalty[sic], politics might be made of it by the Indian politician. In fact conditions are so strained at present that the attitude of all is one of great precaution. Consequently, although I had a list of outstanding Indians, well educated and exceptionally successful in business, in fact leaders in their line, I have hesitated to approach them, even though they had been passed by my committee. I am inclined to think that at present, the clubs will have to be at first largely British and then select slowly and carefully their Indian members.<sup>507</sup>

The formation of Rotary clubs in India in 1929 involved the "politics of recognition" as much as British imperial politics itself. The promise of inclusion came with a tacit set of rules, prime among them being a kind of loyalty test passed only by economic elites who

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<sup>506</sup> Lillian's coverage of their travels through the Indian subcontinent reinforced the general point: "India – Land of Opposites: Where industrial, political, and social life is a labyrinth of superstition and discord, only awaiting a new Theseus to release them," *The Rotarian*, November 1930, 9 – 11, 54 – 55; "India – The New Capital: India presents a difficult problem for Rotary expansion because of the impermanence of the European population, the summer heat, and the widespread caste system," *The Rotarian*, January 1931, 16 – 19, 54 – 56; and "India's Jig-Saw Puzzle: a strife-weary country of power and wealth and enchantment where Rotary already has made its impress at five strategic points," *The Rotarian*, March 1931, 27 – 29, 50 – 56. As with all prior installments, Lillian provided multiple photographs of street life and significant cultural icons.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

remained above/beyond the politics of Indian nationalism. The politics of decolonization and RI's civic internationalism could never be allies in India during the interwar years.<sup>508</sup>

### **The Cities of British Malaysia – Jim's Version**

From India, the Davidsons set sail for Colombo, Ceylon and then Rangoon, Burma, establishing in each city a Rotary club in much the same manner as in India. The Davidsons then chose to travel by riverboat up the Irawadday river to Thayetmo, then on to Mandalay, and finally all the way to Bhamo – just 27 miles from the Chinese border. Their efforts resulted in a new Rotary club in Thayetmo before their departure for the Federated Malay States as well as some consternation for Alex Potter in the Chicago headquarters on how to address their new fellow Rotarians of Burma:

We note names such as U Ba Thein, b.A., U Mg Gyi, M.M. Banerji, and U. Shwe Ni.... Is the U similar to Mr. In this country or to Esq. in Great Britain? ... We are ignorant in this matter and do not want to make a mistake that might show that ignorance or hurt the sensibilities of any of the men in the newly elected clubs.<sup>509</sup>

The incorporation of exotic peers into RI's fellowship sometimes brought on such confusion. But Jim's visit to the Kuala Lumpur Rotary club triggered a series of debates within RI of much greater import: the possibility of "racial classifications" within RI.

Started in the summer of 1928 by L.D. Gammans, an Englishman in the "Co-operative Societies Department" of the Federated Malay States Service, the Kuala

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<sup>508</sup> The postwar relationship between RI and Indian nationalism was not so adversarial. For example, Karl Krueger, editor for *The Rotarian* from 1952 – 74, reported: In my blur of memories is a garden party in New Dehli...[with] 3,000 or so men and women from around the globe [having] come together under the Rotary banner.... Suddenly heads turned toward someone arriving at the edge of the party...being surrounded and hugged. It was Pandit Nehru himself." Forward, *A Century of Service*, 85.

<sup>509</sup> James W. Davidson Papers, Vol. II, January 1929 – October 1929, Alex Potter to James Davidson, 3 October 1929.

Lumpur “Rotary” club was not officially part of RI. Operating without an official charter, the club members anxiously awaited the arrival of the Davidsons by train from Burma in order to demonstrate their legitimacy as a club within RI and be granted an official charter. Gammans first came into contact with Rotary in 1918 when his wife’s cousin invited Gammans, a captain in the British Army at the time, to the Detroit Rotary club. As Jim explained in his report to RI, “Gammans found in Malaya a most happy situation, in fact, a unique one. He found Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Europeans living in harmony to a degree that exists nowhere else that I know of.”<sup>510</sup> The racial diversity of the Federated Malay States seemed so complex yet harmonious to Jim that, in effect, he began to recalibrate his methods and positions worked out in India, “with its communal hatreds, its frequent riots between Hindu and Mohammedan, its caste conflicts and the destructive antagonism between Indian and European to appreciate how different it is here.”<sup>511</sup> For fear that the harmony might not last, Gammans decided to work through his position in the Co-Operative Department, which “brought him in more intimate contact with the different racial groups than would perhaps any other Government office,” to establish “a club with a membership comprising different racial groups.” Since his own father had also been a Rotarian in Portsmouth, England, Gammans chose to write RI’s European Secretariat for pamphlets and publications and then contact Rotarians in Calcutta and Shanghai for more advice rather than start his own club.<sup>512</sup>

When the Kuala Lumpur club filled out the necessary paperwork for securing a club charter in 1928, however, Gammans made an argument for the “widening of the classification rule” in order to accommodate the membership of a Chinese, an Indian, and

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<sup>510</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #18, 3.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Gammans considered starting an independent club and naming it the “Concord club.”



a European “Barrister.” Gammans understood that RI’s rules on classification permitted only one kind of “barrister” at a time in a given club in order to avoid competition among and inordinate concentration of any particular business or profession in each club. The classification principle, in short, was the linchpin to RI’s claim that every Rotary club in the world was “representative cross-section” of its community. But Gammans also understood Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia, arguing that “representatives of the same profession here but of different nationalities normally have less social intercourse with each other than if they were of different professions but the same nationality.”<sup>513</sup> In short order, Jim grasped what Gammans was trying to do in stretching the rules on classification: in Kuala Lumpur one could not presume one community comprised of distinct business and professional identities since “community” in Kuala Lumpur was undeniably complicated by various, distinct racial groups. RI’s civic internationalism, in short, could not possibly function in Kuala Lumpur – nor in any other Malaysian city – without a genuine grappling with racial differences and identities. With an itinerary that included Ipoh, Penang, Serampan, Klang, and Singapore, Jim knew the problem was not unique to Kuala Lumpur.

The unquestioned solidarity of “whiteness” forged across the Atlantic and only rarely challenged by visiting Japanese and Latin American Rotarians had finally come under scrutiny within the ranks of RI. Or, rather, RI’s “extension” into Southeast Asia had finally foregrounded the issue of race as it prevented the erasures of non-white, marginal businessmen and professionals. It was one thing to pocket-veto proposed Rotary clubs in Port au Prince and Kingston, to avoid the recruitment Afro-Cubans and non-white Puerto Ricans, to hope visiting Latin American Rotarians were not too dark

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

skinned for hotel managers in the U.S., and to allow a handful of Asian members of extraordinarily high class status into clubs “over time,” but quite another to reject the Kuala Lumpur club, which was already a known presence in the Federated Malay States merely awaiting formal approval of its charter and membership by Jim. The club was seen as a *fait accompli* in the city and its press.<sup>514</sup>

Jim had to think and act fast. There was no time for him to seek and get formal approval from RI’s International Service Committee scattered throughout Europe and North America. Not that the committee had much of a chance of coming to a consensus on the issue anyway. Davidson reasoned that:

If you will admit that there is a far wider gulf between these men of different racial groups in the same vocation than between any two Europeans in different classifications, are we not then complying with the spirit and following the ultimate aim of the classification rule?<sup>515</sup>

In effect, Davidson, Gammans, and the Kuala Lumpur Rotarians were also arguing for a broader conception of membership in RI than one’s reputation and activities within the marketplace. RI’s positing of transnational market identities in deracinated form was fraying, and Jim knew it. Membership cognizant of racial identity became a feature of the Kuala Lumpur Rotary club and, by extension, in all of the clubs ultimately formed by Jim in the Malaysian peninsula: Singapore, Klang, Ipoh, Penang, Malacca, and Seramban. The racial identities of RI’s exotic peers were no longer limited to euphemistic references to “cultural” and “international” differences.

As a result, the new Malaysian clubs took RI’s civic internationalism to a new and more complicated level of inclusion. Held at the “roomy Masonic Hall beautifully decorated for the occasion,” the club’s inaugural ball featured an “international menu”

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #19, 3 – 4.

with “Chinese, Malay, Indian and European dishes and with Canadian maple syrup thrown in in honour of my home.” The event also attracted His Highness the Sultan of Selangor; Sir William Peel, Government Chief Secretary; and over 100 other notables of various racial and cultural origins.<sup>516</sup> Similar to Kuala Lumpur, the charter members in Klang’s new club included 20 Europeans, 8 Malaysians, 7 Indians, 4 Eurasians, 4 Ceylonese and 2 Chinese members.<sup>517</sup> While in Singapore, Jim had a serious bout with dengue fever, but survived to make about “200 calls on men in their offices,” resulting in 71 charter members who represented “the pick of the officials, of business and professional men, including eleven of the leading Chinese.” The charter members did, in fact, represent the top government and business leaders from Singapore’s Chinese, European, and Malaysian communities and within a year the Singapore Rotary club had 144 members “representing eighteen different nationalities, which constitutes... a record for all Rotary, I am sure.”<sup>518</sup> Like Cairo and the Suez Canal, Singapore was one of the key chokepoints for international trade in general and for the British Empire in particular. Yet, unlike Cairo, the Singapore club encompassed a broad collection of members from around the world as a reflection of the social, political, and economic realities of the city.

Davidson celebrated the comparatively rich racial diversity of the Malaysian clubs in his reports just as RI began touting his exploits in its publications, especially in the pages of *The Rotarian*. In one instance, F.F. Cooray, a Ceylonese member of the Kuala

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid, Report #19, 4.

<sup>517</sup> JWD Papers; Vol.VII; “Original Reports,” 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Report, “Part II and III, Federated Malay States”, 21 November 1929, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Report, “Klang and Singapore,” 25 August 1930.

<sup>518</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII; “Original Reports,” Report #23, p. 5. On Singapore, see Lillian Dow Davison, “All Ships Stop at Singapore: East and West overlap in Singapore: Here trails of trade converge, and the Babel of races gives Rotary an unusual opportunity for service,” *The Rotarian*, July 1931, 26 – 28, 54 – 55. Lillian reported the Singapore club’s nationalities as follows: American, Arabian, Armenian, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Indian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Malayan, Persian, Romanian, Russian, Scottish, and Swiss.

Lumpur Club, announced with confidence that “when the commercial era precipitated new racial and social problems in Malaya, European and Asiatic alike turned to Rotary for the solvent of good-will.” By coincidence, Cooray’s article, entitled “Malaya – Turnstile of East and West,” preceded Lillian’s installment on the Davidsons’ travels in Jerusalem two years earlier. Cooray was only the sign of things to come for RI. Just one of many contributors to the magazine from Rotarians and non-Rotarians outside of North America and Europe, Cooray – along with Rotarian Hamzeh bin Abdullah of the Kuala Lumpur club – served as ocular proof of RI’s gentle expansion into very foreign environments.<sup>519</sup> But no one symbolized better RI’s powers of racial and cultural inclusion than the “Malay Chief” of the Ipoh Rotary club. After a very detailed explanation of the history and complexities of British rule in the various Malay States and Straits Settlements and the growing centrality of Singapore, the Malaysian peninsula, and Southeast Asia to the global economy, Jim explained that the Malay Chief’s father:

sort of upset things for a while by being responsible for the killing of the British Resident, but the son in the picturesque trappings of his father now haunts the jungle no longer. He plays bridge, drinks scotch and soda, has “Ole Man River” on his phonograph after a ten course dinner and predicts that Ramsay Macdonald’s visit to the United States, he hopes will serve as a cement for Anglo Saxon relations. The son-in-law of His Highness, the Sultan of Selangor, another pure Malay, is a member of the Kuala Lumpur club and a delightful fellow he is, with an English education that few Anglo Saxons possess. The world do surely move!<sup>520</sup>

As the embodiment of the forces of modernity unfolding in the Malay peninsula, the Malay Chief evidenced RI’s vision of progress, its “gospel” of civic internationalism to

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<sup>519</sup> F.F. Cooray, “Malaya – Turnstile of East and West,” *The Rotarian*, August 1930, 26, 60. Short biographical features on new members like the chief and other Asian dignitaries such as Japanese businessmen, Chinese generals, Filipino diplomats, and Thai aristocrats joining Rotary clubs were regularly highlighted in *The Rotarian* throughout the late 1920s and 1930s under the category: “Rotary Personalities.”

<sup>520</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII; “Original Reports,” Report #17, 5.

be “spread...among the native peoples of other countries” while Davidson’s new clubs in such far-off lands bore a certain demonstration effect in the imagination of its rank and file on Main Street. That his “classification” as “Malay Chief” made no sense beyond the Malay peninsula no longer mattered to RI. Rather than a cause for concern, in fact, it had become a badge of honor. Coupled with Lillian’s dispatches, the Davidsons’ successes and adaptations in Southeast Asia presented a compelling story of transformation of Asian newcomers from an exotic-other to an exotic-peer within RI’s “world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of service.”

### **The Manchurian Candidate**

While reading through Lillian’s dispatches in *The Rotarian* in 1931, Isaiah Hale of Topeka, Kansas (and tens of thousands other Rotarians like him) would have come across Lillian’s map of the Dutch East Indies superimposed over the familiar silhouette of the United States and North America. The map offers a sense of scale for the average reader of *The Rotarian* in striking form: the island of Sumatra occupies much of the southwest, extending from southern Oregon to central New Mexico; the island of Borneo dominates the Rockies, Java rivals Texas in its length; the island of Celebes connects Chicago with Kansas City; and the island of “Dutch New Guinea” only begins upon arrival in Maryland. Lillian’s point was clear: not only was it a big world “out there” filled with a broad range of cultural, national, racial, linguistic, and religious differences; it was also physically a big world out there. The Dutch East Indies, representing only one portion of the Davidsons’ travels over 2 1/2 years, required visits to Batavia (Jakarta), Surabaya, Bandung, Malang, and Semarang in Java and Medan in Sumatra (in between

trips in Malaysia) and resulted in new clubs in all those cities.<sup>521</sup> Their time among the islands offered Lillian the chance to dig into the rich variety of cultures of the islands and present them in both narrative and photographic form.<sup>522</sup> It also provided the Davidsons with yet another opportunity to educate their respective audiences on the vast distances and cultural/political complexities of the Dutch East Indies and to explore the region (vicariously) as a potential place to travel and/or do business.

The Davidsons returned to the Malay peninsula to finish up work started in Malacca (Melaka), Penang, and Klang before heading north to Bangkok, Siam and then overland through French-controlled portions of Southeast Asia: Cochin-China, Annam, and Tonkin. Jim had success with the Bangkok Rotary club largely because it already existed on its own and was awaiting his approval, much like the club in Kuala Lumpur. But nothing came of his time in Saigon and Hanoi, cities that “at present do not offer Rotary opportunities.”<sup>523</sup> After visits to Hong Kong, Canton, and then Manila, Jim was expected to return to the United States, especially since income from membership dues

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<sup>521</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” Report #21, “Java,” 16 February 1930 and Report #22, “Dutch East Indies,” n.d. and JWD Papers; Vol. IV; July 1930 – March 1931, “Record of Cities Visited,” 12 March 1931.

<sup>522</sup> Lillian’s contributions during this leg of the journey included “Bali, Jewel of the South Sea: Tourists haven’t yet spoiled this quaint island where women run the business and men devote themselves to music and cock fighting,” *The Rotarian*, August 1931, 20 – 23, 44 – 45; “Java – Gem of the Dutch East Indies: Rare glimpses of the most densely populated land on earth where legend and music play a part in the daily life,” *The Rotarian*, September 1931, 28 – 30, 48 – 50; and “Sumatra – Island of Contrasts: a fascinating land of peculiar customs, curious architecture, rich in agriculture and minerals, where remnants of cannibal tribes may still be found,” *The Rotarian*, October 1931, 33 – 35, 53 – 56. The subtitles capture well the emphasis of each article while the photographs emphasized, as in Turkey, Egypt, India, and Burma, the dress and bodies of women as markers of their cultures’ resistance to change in the modern world.

<sup>523</sup> JWD Papers; Vol. VII, “Original Reports,” “Final Report,” 6 April 1931, n.p. Lack of opportunity for Jim did not stop Lillian from her own contributions: “Siam – Magic Land of the East: Bangkok throbs to the modern tempo, with Rotary holding an honored place. Fourteen nationalities are represented in the club,” *The Rotarian*, November 1931, 27 – 31, 52 – 53 and “Mystery-Laden Cambodia: Here a lofty city with a million souls was built...abandoned...forgotten...until sixty years ago an orchid-seeker stumbled on to it,” *The Rotarian*, December 1931, 32 – 33, 46 – 49.

for RI were decreasing thanks to the deepening of the Great Depression and funding for his trip was drying up. By late summer of 1930, the Davidsons had both become acutely aware of the interest in their travels by so many in RI, but also of the economic turmoil on a global scale and its vast consequences. Gone were the heady days of 1926 when RI's annual convention passed a resolution placing a \$1 charge on each member for international expansion. Their itinerary for their return home in the end might not include any time in Japan and China, where Jim had lived and worked so many years before as a US consular agent and war correspondent and where the two had first met.

But Jim had his own wealth to draw upon and his own reasons for traveling a few months longer in East Asia: the Japanese Rotary clubs had established branch clubs in the Manchurian cities of Dairen, Harbin, and Mukden. The new clubs, however, spoke Japanese in their meetings and were formed with no attempt at inclusion of the Chinese business communities of those Chinese cities. While in Southeast Asia, Jim assessed the situation fully: "I am astonished...that the Japanese have organized a Japanese club in Manchuria at Harbin."<sup>524</sup> Jim understood that, from the Japanese Rotarians' perspective, club growth was occurring within "their" 70<sup>th</sup> district as defined by RI: Japan, Korea, and Manchuria. And Jim personally knew its longtime district governor, the ubiquitous Umekichi Yoneyama of Tokyo, whose

...territory is 'South Manchuria.' It would have been perhaps better to have confined him to Japan and Korea, although I believe that the club at Dairen should have been Japanese – it is largely a Japanese city and under their control."<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> James Davison to Chesley Perry, from Penang, 5 August 1930, ; JWD Papers; Vol. IV; July 1930 – March 1931.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

But Jim also knew the Chinese Rotarians and especially the city of Shanghai very well. He anticipated the Chinese point of view and the potential diplomatic fallout not just for RI but also for Sino-Japanese relations:

Moukden, as you know, is the Chinese capital of Manchuria. To organize a Japanese club there is as wrong as it would be to have only a Chinese club in Tokyo, and is likely to do all kinds of harm. I fear we will be severely criticized for it.<sup>526</sup>

Caught between both sides, Jim offered his services to RI:

Harbin is still further north. I cannot possibly understand his starting a Japanese club there.... I wonder if the Board would not authorize me to visit these points. Any readjustment must be handled with the greatest tact, so as not to hurt the feelings of the Japanese.<sup>527</sup>

A reflection of the Japanese Empire's expansionist policies into Manchuria, the all-Japanese clubs on Chinese soil were pushing the limits of RI's civic internationalism. The Rotarians (both Chinese and expatriate) in Shanghai, Peking, Tsingtao, and several other key trade centers in the region made clear in RI's internal debates a cascade of reasons for their fears. One telegram from the Shanghai club to RI left no room for doubt:

Shanghai club learns with great concern Japanese forming Rotary Club in Harbin using Japanese Language All Charter Members Japanese Stop Ninetyfive Percent Population Harbin Chinese and Russian with latter universal language Strongly recommend granting charter be suspended pending arrival Davidson.<sup>528</sup>

Like Jim, they could see the commercial and political repercussions rippling throughout all of East Asia.

Could the "world fellowship" of RI help mitigate the growing presence of the Japanese Empire and its military in China? Of all officers in RI, Jim Davidson was best suited to the challenge. Given his own personal history with the Japanese government,

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Telegram, George Fitch to Rotary Headquarters, Chicago, 20 August 1930; JWD Papers; Vol. IV; July 1930 – March 1931.



his reputation among Japanese Rotarians, and his own fortuitous presence in the region, he decided to visit both the Chinese and Japanese Rotary clubs before returning to North America. The final leg of the Davidsons' long journey, in other words, ran contrary to all prior efforts. Rather than blazing a trail for new clubs in Southern and Southeastern Asia in happy fulfillment of RI's dreams of forming a "golden chain" of Rotary clubs around the world, Jim was attempting to patch up Sino-Japanese tensions over the expansion of Rotary clubs into Manchuria. RI had become a victim of its own early success in East Asia as "fellow" clubs, repositories for the upper echelons of diplomatic, political, and economic power in both China and Japan, were clashing into each other – with no solution in sight.

The Davidsons arrived in Shanghai in January 1931 and began work immediately in quelling dissent among the ranks. Jim had every confidence that all could be worked out among reasonable, enlightened men from both sides of the issue. In the Shanghai, Tientsin and Peking Rotary clubs, Jim heard the full list of complaints and concerns regarding Japanese expansionism. His visits to Harbin and Mukden were quite opposite in tone, with an emphasis on fellowship rather than dissension. His job in Manchuria was to make a first hand survey rather than be pulled into the fray, to represent the seriousness of RI's concerns and willingness to listen to all sides.<sup>529</sup> Before leaving for Japan, the Davidsons dined with Viscount Saito, Governor-General of Korea Keijo (Seoul), the former admiral of the Japanese Navy who was directly responsible for the establishment of the Rotary club in the Korean peninsula.<sup>530</sup> (Little did the Davidsons or the Viscount

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<sup>529</sup> "The Manchurian Situation," 18 April 1931; JWD Papers; Vol. V; March 1931 – November 1931.

<sup>530</sup> Lillian described in detail their visit with Viscount Saito and their time in Korea in "Where Change Meets Change: a fascinating picture of Korea (Chosen), 'land of the morning calm,' rich

realize, but Saito was very soon to become the next Prime Minister of Japan (May 1932 – July 1934) in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi by Japanese naval officers.)

The Davidsons finally wound up their entire tour of Asia where he had begun his own diplomatic career decades before: working with the Japanese to resolve tensions with China. This time, however, he could not risk taking one side over the other. Jim visited all the Japanese clubs except Nagoya in a tactful effort to rein in the Japanese Rotarians without offending their sensibilities. It was a significant diplomatic challenge. By 1930, the Japanese Rotarians, and especially the Tokyo Rotary club, had become almost mythic in the world of Rotary as non-western businessmen and professionals who had grasped the cooperative ethos of RI's civic internationalism and made it all their own (see chapter 3). They were not accustomed to anything but praise from RI and Rotarians visiting Japanese clubs from abroad. In the end, Jim's proposal to RI had three parts: 1) expand the "70<sup>th</sup> district" to include all of northern China as well as Manchuria, Korea, and Japan, thereby undermining the sense of "Japanese control" of the district and forcing the Chinese clubs to deal with the Japanese more directly under the common institutional machinery of RI, 2) revoke the club charter for Harbin since "the club is just a mistake and a very unfortunate one," and 3) create two separate Rotary clubs in Mukden, one for the Chinese, Russians, and other internationals and one for the Japanese.<sup>531</sup>

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in timber and minerals and noted for its scenic beauty," *The Rotarian*, December 1932, 30 – 32, 48 – 50.

<sup>531</sup> "The Manchurian Situation," 18 April 1931; JWD Papers; Vol. V; March 1931 – November 1931.

## **Conclusion**

None of Jim's proposals ever came to fruition. Less than six months after the Davidsons' return to Vancouver from Tokyo in late March, 1931, the Mukden Incident occurred, marking the start of the Japanese military command's transformation of Japanese foreign policy into an increasingly aggressive posture over the course of the 1930s. Instead, RI eventually carved out the 81<sup>st</sup> District for the Chinese Rotarians and supported them in their efforts to build into the interior of China while the clubs in Harbin and Mukden continued unabated as Japanese-dominated clubs. Meanwhile, Jim, Lillian, and their daughter Marjory returned to a hero's welcome in Vancouver. In early April, Jim arrived at the Chicago headquarters of Rotary International in order to present his formal report on all his travels. Having spent over two years and \$32,000 of RI's money, Jim had much to account for. But the 23 new Rotary clubs formed between "Prague and Shanghai" not only fulfilled RI's particular geographical conceit about circumnavigation, but also proved significant epicenters of growth for RI after World War II and particularly after the 1960s.

Sydney Pascall, an activist on behalf of the League of Nations, former head of the British Rotary clubs, and soon to become president of RI himself, echoed the views of many in RI's leadership in 1931:

When Rotary crossed the Atlantic and planted a seed in Great Britain, it set up the first milestone in its international progress. I think the second was the setting up of a club on the Continent of Europe. This ensured the future being really International, rather than almost entirely Anglo-Saxon.

I believe that you have set up another milestone, possibly the greatest of all; you have established Rotary where races meet; you have established Rotary as a common meeting ground for those races; you have made Rotary international, inter-racial.

By far the greatest task now awaiting us is to maintain and develop this pioneer work of yours.<sup>532</sup>

And Pascall was hardly alone in these sentiments. RI's Board of Directors and all its top officers from around the world eagerly anticipated Davidson's final report, delivered to a standing-room-only crowd. Secretary Perry recounted how Davidson "first used a map of Asia to show us where he had been. Then he presented some of the difficulties which Rotary International must face in its program of extension in the Far East." Along with Davidson's difficulties, Perry and others also heard of

the tremendous opportunities ... in this densely populated section of the world. Entrancing was the entire picture.... The friendships he has made, the mutual understandings he has helped to develop, the closer union of many different races – these are all a part of the intangible reward which is the greatest satisfaction that can come to a man.<sup>533</sup>

Combining a vision of civic uplift and citizenship development through the local Rotary club with the creation of an international network of business and professional peers defined Rotary's civic internationalism. Its creed promised non-U.S. elites the world over full participation in emerging international markets while masking the growing hegemonic presence of the United States in those same markets. An open invitation was hard to resist. And its acceptance brought legitimacy – and hegemony.

But it was Lillian's writings in *The Rotarian* that magnified the effects of Jim's travels significantly in the minds of Main Street's denizens. Providing snapshots of Jim's organizing activities, summarizing his political and historical analyses, and describing the panoply of cultural and national differences encountered in their travels all was in a day's

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<sup>532</sup> Sydney Pascall to Davidson, 5 June 1931. JWD Papers; Vol. V; 27 March 1931 – 14 November 1931.

<sup>533</sup> Chesley Perry to RI Board of Directors, 16 April 1931. JWD Papers; Vol. V; 27 March 1931 – 14 November 1931.

work for Lillian. As mediator and interpreter for RI's readership for over two years, Lillian developed the linkage between the domestic and the abroad in crucial ways. The construction and expansion of U.S. imperialism demanded a demystification of the exotic through a normalization of U.S. cultural and economic influences in such far-flung environs. By the end of Lillian's series in 1933, and in tandem with RI's editorial policies in general during the same period, the appearance of Rotary clubs in cities like Colombo, Jakarta, and Bangkok went from titillating news to affirmation of RI's civic internationalism.

There was no part of the world beyond the reach of Rotary International. Nor should there be. The world was not so different from the heartland after all.

### Conclusion: “From Here On!”

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In some of the republics of Central America the general public has the opinion that the United States plans the annexation of these countries and will continue until the South American Continent shall also become a part of the United States. Preposterous, of course, you will say, but such an opinion exists....

“Practical Problems of Rotary Service,” September 1929.<sup>534</sup>

We are determined that before the sun sets on this terrible struggle our flag will be recognized throughout the world as a symbol of freedom on the one hand and of overwhelming force on the other.

General George C. Marshall, March 1942.<sup>535</sup>

Though tempered by two world wars, the advent of the Great Depression, and the rise of economic nationalism and militarism by the 1930s, RI’s civic internationalism represented a constant movement toward greater international engagement between the heartland and the abroad, between Main Street and the countless emerging markets worldwide. In the name of inculcating civic cooperation in familiar, small-town terms and developing cross-border business progressivism, RI defined itself as a mediator across national boundaries and cultural differences, as an institutional bridge among “fellow” businessmen and professionals of specific cities and distinct nations yet not beholden to any one government, any one industry, any one part of the world.

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<sup>534</sup> *The Rotarian*, September 1929, 39.

<sup>535</sup> Quoted in *Times-Herald*, 3 March 1942, 1. Quotation also appears on the northern wall of the World War II Memorial, Washington, DC

As a transnational network, RI evolved into a middle ground for U.S. and non-U.S. business and professional classes. RI's civic internationalism distinguished itself from missionary internationalism because it was secular, from large philanthropic foundations because it was more middle-class and collaborative, from both transnational corporations and U.S. diplomatic efforts because it was non-profit in status, and from similar INGOs because of its global scale and scope of operations among businessmen. Though patriotic and religious in tone, it was a civilizing mission outside of the state and secular in purpose. In this way, RI's civic internationalism operated as a private-sector version of Wilsonianism – in all its contradictions. RI's rapid interwar growth, therefore, captures the transition from missionary internationalism before WWI to the postwar focus on human rights, modernization theories, and cultural diplomacy overseen by state agencies and professionals.

Overall, RI's struggle to construct its organizational umbrella “throughout all the commercial centers of the world” provides an extended case study in how business cultures and Progressivism within the United States hammered out a new praxis of consumerism, professionalism, and internationalism in dialogue with many other parts of the world. By positing transnational business and professional solidarities, RI opened up a social space for what I call the exotic-peer. First in its literature and then in practice, RI strove to attract important segments of other nations' business and professional elites. A businessman's form of cultural internationalism, RI's civic internationalism promised to streamline access to U.S. markets for those outside the U.S. and access to non-U.S. markets for those inside. For civic boosters worldwide, it was a compelling promise.

RI's civic internationalism made important contributions in the transformation of the United States from reluctant world power to righteous world policeman because of its strong appeal throughout the interwar period. For example, even in the midst of the Neutrality Acts of the 1930s and despite the closure of Rotary clubs in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and several other European nations in the same period, several hundred Rotary clubs worldwide were holding local community forums called "Rotary Institutes of International Understanding." Receiving eager support from RI's headquarters and building on more informal versions of the same since the early 1920s, the community forums took on whatever focus the local club's "international service committee" deemed most effective: presentations on international relations at and through the local high school, large community gatherings with guests from local universities speaking on international concerns, storefront displays with varying international themes, correspondence and student exchanges with Rotary clubs around the world, and many other permutations.<sup>536</sup> RI's innumerable daily interactions, weekly meetings, constant correspondence, and regular conferences devoted to "international service" belied the presumed isolationism of the interwar period. In aggregate, these activities represented an awareness of and openness to international engagement on the part of Rotarians BOTH inside and outside the United States rather than just the salesmanship of "promotionalists."<sup>537</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> *Convention Proceedings, Thirty-second Annual Convention*; Denver, Col.; 15 – 20 June 1941; "Report of the Secretary, Institutes of Understanding;" 330 – 331. For more detail, see Box 1, "International Institutes," RI Archives and numerous articles on the same in *The Rotarian* after 1936.

<sup>537</sup> Daniel Rodgers uses the term in quotation to describe the kind of business internationalists that comprised much of RI's membership in the larger cities. See Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1998), Introduction.



Though Rotary International was just one tributary feeding into the rising current of INGOs over the twentieth century, its civic internationalism represented an important ideological and institutional contribution to an emerging global civil society. As a result, RI's success both inside and outside the U.S. helped pave the way for a much more active role for the United States as a nation in the world after World War II. More than a holding pattern of private sector diplomacy until the emergence of the national security state and its cold war policies and institutions, the international endeavors of RI between the wars developed important continuities in U.S./non-U.S. contact and exchange that ultimately bridged those two world wars. The sense of a shared international mission among all Rotarians pervaded the organization throughout the period such that the United Nations and UNESCO were seen as the culmination of RI's own civic internationalism. At the UN Charter Conference, in fact, there were 23 observers from RI, 11 of them official observers (far more than most other INGOs), while RI itself had formal status as a consultant organization.<sup>538</sup>

Basic postwar international institutions like the UN and Bretton Woods coupled with emerging international discourses on human rights began to overtake RI's civic internationalism as the basic points of reference even within RI's own publications and manners of speaking.<sup>539</sup> At the height of World War II, for instance, RI pieced together a small, edited volume entitled "A World to Live In." The subtitle, however, marked a transition in the organization's discourse: "Thirty thoughtful men explore problems which will become acute when World War II ends... and an increasing number of people

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<sup>538</sup> David C. Forward, *A Century of Service: The Story of Rotary International* (Chicago: Rotary International, 2003), 196 – 199,

<sup>539</sup> On this important transition from the New Deal and the Atlantic Charter to international institutions and discourses on human rights, see Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2005).

will possess the unalienable rights of human beings.” Ranging from Gandhi to Cordell Hull, Henry Wallace to Henry Ford, John Dewey to Charles F. Kettering, the booklet was a compilation of all the top contributors to *The Rotarian* on international issues over the previous five years. The publication was so popular with clubs that it went through four printings for a total of 60,000 copies and led to a companion volume in 1944, entitled “Peace is a Process,” with the same purpose and structure. Since entire clubs used these booklets for a variety of activities, the effects were multiple.<sup>540</sup>

By war’s end, RI had committed itself fully to the establishment and future success of the United Nations. In contrast to the ambiguous and uneven relations between RI and the League of Nations over the entire interwar period, Rotary International found itself in a completely new international system. One could not be a Rotarian and fail to grasp the new order. To that end, RI’s continuous stream of publications on the UN formed a broad educational program for a worldwide membership swelling from almost 250,000 in 1945 to 340,000 in 1950.<sup>541</sup> One of the most prominent was “From Here On!” Organized as a guide for all club activities on learning the specific structures and goals of the UN, the booklet laid out every single article and subsection of the Charter of the United Nations with detailed comments and questions woven into the text.<sup>542</sup> “From Here On!” presented the UN as the best means of managing world affairs because of its rational design and professionalism. It was an organization Rotarians could understand

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<sup>540</sup> Leland D. Case, ed., *A World To Live In* (Chicago: Rotary International, 1942). On the popularity and distribution of “A World To Live In,” Leland D. Case, ed., *Peace Is A Process* (Chicago: Rotary International, 1944), 4.

<sup>541</sup> “Rotary’s Membership Growth,” in *Rotary: Fifty Years of Service, 1905 – 1955* (Chicago: Rotary International, 1955), insert between pp. 48 – 49.

<sup>542</sup> *From Here On!* (Chicago: Rotary International, 1945).

and trust. As a road map for the future of international peace, the booklet testified to the terms of RI's incorporation into the postwar order.

Public international institutions like the UN, however, did not obviate the existence of Rotary International. RI's international growth actually accelerated over the postwar era while the Rotary Foundation – RI's philanthropic arm – took off after 1947 with funding and logistical support for international exchange programs, ambassadorial scholarship funds, and international public health initiatives.<sup>543</sup> As a function of cultural and business internationalism and private philanthropy, RI flourished before World War II. In a postwar context, its purposes were more complicated, but also more wide-ranging. Always resonant with mainstream, middlebrow culture in North America, U.S. Rotary clubs did well with “the organization man” of the postwar era. Rotarians knew how to speak his language. Still, trapped by its own formula for success from an earlier period, RI remained emphatically private, individualistic, gendered, and voluntary in its philosophy and institutional practices.

As a result, the postwar era meant both opportunity and closure for Rotary. By the early 1950s, the exigencies of a deepening cold war began to attenuate the openness of U.S. Rotarians to the original promises of RI's civic internationalism in the face of

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<sup>543</sup> By 1962, the year of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the closure of scores of long established Cuban Rotary clubs, RI reported a worldwide membership of 519,500, with nearly half its membership outside the U.S. and Canada: 37,000 in Asia; 30,140 in Australia/New Zealand and Sub-Sahara Africa; 67,000 in continental Europe, North Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean; 42,000 in Great Britain and Ireland; and 43,300 in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Proceedings of the Fifty-Third Annual Rotary Convention*; 3 – 7 June 1962; Los Angeles, Ca.; 294 – 295. Meanwhile, RI's successful partnership with the World Health Organization in the eradication of polio worldwide from the 1980s to 2000s has become legendary while its student exchange programs have sent tens of thousands students throughout the world since 1947. See Sarah Gibbard Cook, “For All the World's Children: Rotary and the Vision of a Polio Free World,” 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment, unpublished manuscript, 2000, 288 – 390, RI Archives; and for the history of the disease and the story of its near eradication over the twentieth-century, see David Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

growing U.S. globalism and fierce anti-communism. U.S. global hegemony in the postwar era tolerated fewer voices from fewer places even as middlebrow interest in cultural internationalism continued to grow.<sup>544</sup> Similarly, RI's vision of international peace and understanding had become less collaborative in nature even as the organization continued to sink its roots into smaller cities and towns throughout Latin America, Asia and eventually all of Africa and the Caribbean. Even though RI experienced an extended second wave of international growth in the postwar era (and this time joined in full force by Lions and eventually Kiwanis clubs), its civic internationalism fell under the shadow of a national security umbrella and a permanent war economy with global reach.<sup>545</sup> The flow of ideas, norms, and practices within the world of Rotary thus began moving away from a middle ground for international engagement toward the gravitational pull of the United States.

The fates of Japanese, German, Chinese, and Cuban Rotary clubs in the postwar era particularly demonstrate opposite ends of this fundamental change in international relations, where key postwar U.S. allies once again re-emerged as major growth centers for Rotary Clubs (Germany and Japan) while new Communist states permanently shut down long established Rotary clubs soon after Communist parties came to power (China and Cuba). While Rotary clubs had precarious relations with Fascist states in the 1930s, they were always anathema to Communist states. In a cold war context, that meant a

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<sup>544</sup> See, for example, Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 137 – 1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) on the former point and Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asian in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945 – 1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) on the latter point.

<sup>545</sup> On the rise of the national security state in the U.S. and its global implications, see Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945 – 1954* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1992).

great deal. Given their devotion to market-based ideologies and institutional links with global capitalism, Rotary clubs became reliable postwar markers of “western” cultural, political, and economic influence. No longer operating in any independent capacity, RI had become an invisible ally in the cold war.

But these circumstances also entailed opportunity for rapid postwar growth. As decolonization progressed, local business and professional elites in commercial centers of former European colonies found in Rotary International a willing partner and useful gateway into transnational networks peopled with their counterparts. Social networking could pay off just as much in Jakarta in 1955 as it did in Chicago in 1905. For example, though a relative trickle before World War II, RI’s presence in the Asian sub-continent served as a transitional medium from British imperial administration to postwar independence. Indian Rotary clubs exploded in numbers after 1947, eventually becoming one of the densest concentrations of clubs outside the United States as well as one of the most important financial contributors to RI’s philanthropic projects. In other words, the relative autonomy of local clubs and administrative “districts” within RI could suit many interests in the postwar, postcolonial setting, so long as they stayed within the political and economic parameters of the cold war. For many parts of the postcolonial world, that was a manageable task.

When Senator Vandenberg of Michigan stood to announce his conversion from stalwart isolationist to avid internationalist on the floor of the U.S. Senate on 10 January 1945, he declared “our oceans [had] ceased to be moats.”<sup>546</sup> But Rotary International had been in conversation with the rest of the world long before the Senator’s own

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<sup>546</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 79<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 164 – 167.

realization of America's place in the world. In truth, the Senator was heralding the preponderance of U.S. political, cultural, economic, and military power in the postwar era. In that regard, Rotary International played an important role.

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