



## **Paul P. Harris**

**4/19/1868 - 1/27/1947**

*Founder of Rotary*



Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary, was born in Racine, Wisconsin, USA, but moved at the age of three to Wallingford, Vermont, to be raised by his grandparents. In the forward to his autobiography, *My Road to Rotary*, he credits the friendliness and tolerance he found in Vermont as his inspiration for the creation of Rotary.

Trained as a lawyer, Paul gave himself five years after his graduation from law school in 1891 to see as much of the world as possible before settling down and hanging out his shingle. During that time, he traveled widely, supporting himself with a great variety of jobs. He worked as a reporter in San Francisco, a teacher at a business college in Los Angeles, a cowboy in Colorado, a desk clerk in Jacksonville, Florida, a tender of cattle on a freighter to England, and as a traveling salesman for a granite company, covering both the U.S. and Europe.

Remaining true to his five-year plan, he settled in Chicago in 1896, and it was there on the evening of February 23, 1905, that he met with three friends to discuss his idea for a businessmen's club. This is commonly regarded as the first Rotary club meeting. Over the next five years, the movement spread as Rotary clubs were formed in other U.S. cities. When the National Association of Rotary Clubs held its first convention in 1910, Paul was elected president.

After his term, and as the organization's only president-emeritus, Paul continued to travel extensively, promoting Rotary both in the USA and abroad. A prolific writer, Paul wrote several books about the early days of the organization and a role he was privileged to play in it. These include *The Founder of Rotary*, *This Rotarian Age* and the autobiographical *My Road to Rotary*. He also wrote several volumes of *Peregrinations* detailing his many travels. He died in Chicago.