

# Paul Harris – Founder Of Rotary

Paul Harris was born in [Wisconsin](#) to George and Cornilia Harris. He was the couple's second child. At age 3, when his family fell on hard times, Paul was moved with a sibling to [Vermont](#) to live with his paternal grandparents,

While living in Vermont, he attended [Vermont Academy](#) in Saxtons River, [Black River Academy](#) in Ludlow, but was expelled after only a short time. At his secondary school in Rutland, he was known as a prankster. After secondary school, he attended [the University of Vermont](#). In 1886, he was expelled in an incident involving a secret society. In the fall of 1887, he attended [Princeton University](#).

Due to the death of his grandfather in the spring of 1888, he did not return to school the following fall. Harris soon moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where he was apprenticed at a local law firm. After completing his apprenticeship, he studied law at the [University of Iowa](#). He graduated with a Bachelor of Laws in June 1891.

It was 2 July 1910 in Chicago that Harris married Jean Thomson, a Scotswoman whom he had met at a local nature club. Jean traveled the world with Harris in support of Rotary. She helped to make women an important part of Rotary, eventually leading to all Rotary Clubs admitting women as full members. The couple never had any children.<sup>[3]</sup>

Harris began his law practice in 1896 in Chicago's main business district. He would be active in this practice for the next forty years. After establishing his law practice, Harris began to consider the benefits of the formation of a social organization for local professionals. In 1905, Harris organized the first Rotary Club "in fellowship and friendship" with three clients and local businessmen, Silvester Schele, Gustavus Loehr, and Hiram Shorey. His initial goal was solely to create a club of professional and business men for friendship and fellowship. Soon, Harris realized that Rotary needed a greater purpose.

When Harris was elected as third president of the Chicago Rotary Club in 1907, the club initiated its first public service project, the construction of public toilets in Chicago. This step transformed Rotary into the world's first Service Club.