History of the Columbus (Noon) Rotary Club

Responding to fifty-two invitations sent to prominent business and professional men in the community, twenty-three men met for lunch on March 25, 1920 at the Evans Hotel in downtown Columbus to organize the Columbus Rotary club. Camden J. Gaslow, temporary President, called the meeting to order. He was assisted by Horatio H. Adams, temporary Secretary. Twenty-one of the men became charter members. The following officers were elected: Camden JH. Gaslow, President; Dr. W. S. Evans, Vice President; Horatio Adams, Secretary; G. W. Phillips, Treasurer; Carl Kramer and John A. Reece, Directors; and Dan C. Kavanaugh, Sergeant-at-Arms.

Following lunch, Gaslow, as President, reconvened the meeting. Representatives of the Fremont, Lincoln and Norfolk clubs were introduced. The constitution and by-laws of the International Association of Rotary Clubs were read by Ray W. Hammond of Fremont. The same was adopted by the Columbus Club upon motion of Mr. Fitzsimmonds and seconded by Mr. Kavanaugh, the members voting “yes”. The regular meeting of the club were to be every Tuesday noon, with the exception that the second Tuesday of each month was reserved for a 6:30 P.M dinner meeting, with ladies invited. An initiation fee of $10.00 was set, with annual dues at $20.00 per year.

The twenty-one charter members were: Horatio H. Adams, Gus Becher, Anthony G. (Tony) Denny, Jack Echols, Harrison (Harry) Elliott, W.S. (Wills) Evans, Clifford G. (Fitz) Fitzsimmonds, Camden J. Gaslow, Ray C. Gates, Henry H. Hockenberger, Edgar Howard, Dan C. Kavanough, Carl Kramer, James P. Martin, William H. (Billie) Owens, George W. Pillips, Leban F. Rector, John A. (Jack) Reece, Wood Smith, Dr. H.E. (Harry) Snyder, Dr. Archie E. Vallier.

At the first regular meeting on March 30th, no program had been arranged so Edgar Howard led a discussion of the advantages of recruiting a canning factory for Columbus. At the April 13th evening meeting, the program consisted of a discussion regarding the site for the county seat building. The sentiment was for Columbus to continue as the county seat with the site north of Frankfort Square the preferred location for the new building. At this meeting, the first fines of 50 cents were levied for the violation of addressing members as “Mr.” instead of by their first names.

At the evening meeting on April 20th, which was state primary election night, no program was given. The meal was hastily served so that the membership could resume their task of securing votes for the county seat site and the preferred location. Henry Hockenberger, who had been absent for some time, announced that he had been pleasantly entertained at the Rotary Club in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

The official charter for the Columbus Club was presented at a charter ceremony on Tuesday evening May 18, 1920, by Ray Hammond, secretary of the Fremont Rotary Club. The Columbus club was the 714th Rotary club formed in the world.

The June 8th evening meeting was held in the banquet room of the Evans Hotel. Many of the members brought their wives. During the dinner, the members sang songs and engaged in general conversation. After the meal Dr. Archie Vallier read his address related to the medical profession. Following his talk the membership once again entertained itself with songs. Mrs. Grover Long was called upon to entertain the club y singing three solos. As reported, “The evening was a most enjoyable one for all present and all went away thoroughly convinced that the Rotary Club is for good of the Community.”

The Columbus Rotary Club has continued to function over the past 75 years to promote the principles of friendship, fellowship and better understanding between the business and professional people of the city and surrounding counties. Through the individual members, the club has been identified with the civic progress of Columbus and Platte County. Members have served as mayors, city council members, county supervisors, school board members, president and chairperson of all the civic and religious organization in our city. During the past 75 years, the Columbus Rotary Club has indeed been a powerful force in the community. The effects of this and other Rotary Clubs throughout the world have been far-reaching.

The Columbus Rotary Club continues to support the Rotary Foundation which works for world understanding through education and cultural exchange. Our club has thirty-four Paul Harris Fellows who have contributed $1000 or more to the Rotary Foundation. Total contributions to the Rotary Foundation from the Columbus Club are over $52,000. Included in this amount is $15,000 given to the “Polio Plus” program for the specific purpose of eradication polio worldwide by the year 2005.

The Columbus Club has also been active in sponsoring programs for the benefit of youth by way of scholarships to worthy students and contributing funds to state youth programs such as Boys’ State and Girls’ State. ; The club also actively seeks high-school age students to send overseas on a one-year educational and cultural experience. In addition to sending our youth overseas, the Columbus clubs also sponsors students from foreign countries to come to Columbus to study for one year in the Columbus-area high schools.

The Columbus Rotary Club takes great pride in the standards for membership, which no numbers about a hounded men and women. To expand the benefits of Rotary membership to more in the community, the club has sponsored the creation of a new club in Columbus. This club, the Columbus Morning Club, was recently chartered and will now share anniversaries with its parent club.

(The above gleaned from old minutes of the Columbus Rotary Club and written in 1995 to recognize the 75th anniversary of the Club)