



Through the years, members of the Rotary Club of Charleston have been involved significantly in two major renovation projects at Marion Square, seen here in a decades-old picture from above. *(Photo courtesy of the Francis Marion Hotel.)*

The 1940s: Club grows in strength

Peter Lucash, contributing editor

Overview

As the Rotary Club of Charleston entered its third decade, it was to realize a new potential in its leadership and emerge stronger. Members became more aware of the Club's responsibilities and capabilities than ever before.

As in past decades, Charleston Rotarians' countless hours of war-related and other community service showed they epitomized "service above self."

Membership

In 1940, membership stood at 84, and with the demands of the years of World War II, and the calling of many members into service, it was a struggle even to show an increase of 14 members by 1945.

The District Conference was held in Charleston in April 1949 and the decade closed with 116 members on the roster.

Projects and community service

Rotary members were in the forefront in the war bond drives. In 1943, Rotarians purchased \$514,737 worth of bonds in the Third War Loan campaign, and in the Fifth campaign, they raised almost \$100,000. They worked on scrap metal drives and for the U.S.O. They helped entertain the wounded at Stark General Hospital. Contributions from the Club went regularly to the Red Cross and various war relief agencies.

In 1946, the Club turned its attention to postwar planning. For the first time, the Club exceeded 100 in membership. In the same

year, the Club sponsored the start of the North Charleston Rotary Club. Julius Schroeder served as special representative to organize the new club.

In 1946, Jack Krawcheck, chairman of the Civic Welfare Committee, supervised a project for the beautification of Marion Square. Club members raised \$10,000 for this project, which involved the planting of more than 10,000 shrubs, plants and trees, the laying out of a promenade, the installations of copies of old Charleston gas lamps, and other work to turn the bleak vista into a beauty spot.

The years 1947 and 1948 were particularly good for our Club. For two years in succession, the Charleston Club received the President's Award for the state. Recognition was given in 1947 for the mammoth job Charleston Rotarians had done in shipping more than 300 packages weighing more than a ton to help the distressed people of Charleville, France.

The decade was not to close without seeing further growth of Rotary International in our area. In 1947, the Charleston Club sponsored the organization and chartering of the Summerville Rotary Club with special representative Tyre Cockerham leading the way. In 1949, the Charleston Club started the St. Andrews Rotary Club. Hans Koebig was the special representative.

Notable speakers

Distinguished guests spent time with members of the Rotary Club of Charleston during the decade, including:

- Fernande Carbojal of Lima, Peru, who served as president of Rotary International in the early 1940s;
- S.C. Gov. Olin D. Johnson;
- Secretary of State James F. Byrnes; and
- Lady Astor.

The only remaining living man of the four who started Christmas Seals in 1907, L. Mitchell Hodges, spoke to the club.

1940–41: Looking at expansion

Rotary Clubs were first banned in Japan, then disbanded in all countries dominated by Germany during World War II. Members were urged to contribute liberally to the ambulance fund drive for the British. Buddy Thornhill stated members might be asked to care for refugees from Britain.

W.D. Workman was the editor of the club's weekly newsletter, called the *Keyway* as the Club entered its third decade. Members met weekly at 2 p.m., and the budget for the year amounted to \$2,101. Members purchased their own luncheon tickets. The Club's officers and members complained about the Student Loan committee because they didn't know how many loans had been made or how the fund stood financially. The Club wanted to get a history brought up to date and written for posterity, but the job meant too much responsibility for any member, so nothing was done. The Club underwrote the expense of a traffic survey to the amount of \$500.

An Interclub Council was organized with George Rogers representing Rotary. An intercity meeting of Rotary clubs from Beaufort, Walterboro, Georgetown and Charleston was held and the Club investigated the possibility of organizing Rotary in Summerville and Moncks Corner.

The Central Council of the PTA requested that Rotary cooperate in an effort to move the "Red Light District" from the vicinity of Memminger High School. An Institute of Understanding, in cooperation with Rotary International, was approved and the Club contributed \$250 for the project. The Institute convened one night a week for four weeks, and it was an outstanding success.

R.E. Haynes was appointed scoutmaster of the Rotary-sponsored Scout Troop. Ladies' Night featured an oyster roast at Huck's. Beautifying Marion Square was discussed before the membership, and a Rotary International information program, with half of the Club participating, was broadcast over radio. Because attendance had fallen to 61.4 percent, the director cracked down on members not meeting attendance requirements and asked for many resignations.

President A.W. Allison's ready wit, originality, firmness and fine leadership contributed to a very successful year.

Start: 84 members. End: 85 members.

1941-42: Civilian defense services offered

In this year of war, the Club offered the services of the entire membership to Civilian Defense, due to the gravity of the world situation. Automobiles, tires and gasoline were hard to come by.

Paul Buckholdt became editor of the *Keyway*, and it was a controversial sheet, giving the editor's opinions in no uncertain words. Consequently, it was well read. Rotary emblems were given to all new members. Members were also presented framed copies of the Objectives of Rotary. The Club had a "fine" box at the entrance to the meeting, where tardy members were expected to drop change.

In January, a Tuesday was set aside for "Grouch Day" when members could unburden all pet peeves. The president came to that meeting wearing a catcher's mask and chest protector! Rufus Barkley became president of the Boy Scout council. The Club would only sing "Grandfather's Clock," and "Home on the Range."

An oyster roast also was held at the Lamar Place on Highway 61. The luncheon fee was raised from 90 cents to one dollar. The Club stopped honoring birthdays each week and had a birthday cake once a month.

The Service Club Council requested all service clubs to approve the following rules: not to permit appeals for various causes; not to permit sales or offers for sale of tickets; and not to permit distribution of literature or advertising at luncheons, unless it had a bearing on the day's program. A.W. Allison and G. Simms McDowell were captains of opposing teams for a Rotary quiz. Changes were made in the Club's bylaws and Buddy Thornhill became the Club's first "Senior Member."

President Clarence Legerton attended the Rotary International Convention in Denver, and the District Conference was held in Blue Ridge.

The District Finance Committee eliminated all registration fees for the District Conference. Jack Krawcheck started a scholarship

fund for medical students if they could not find jobs during the summer months. Club members had to be admonished for unnecessary talking and disturbance after the gong had sounded.

Start: 85 members. End: 83 members.

1942–43: Club hosts student guests

The president of Rotary International, Fernande Carbojal of Lima, Peru, spoke during the year to the members and wives and other distinguished guests. It was a gala occasion.

In other news, the USO asked Rotarians and their wives to chaperone dances. Rotarians were asked by Clay Evatt to bring a serviceman to the special Christmas meeting. Tom Waring appealed to Rotarians to get behind the nationwide drive to collect metals. A price ceiling was put on items to prevent scrap dealers from making a fortune.

Student guests from high schools were present at each Rotary meeting and, as a result, became conversant with Rotary ideals. Among these were W.C. Coleman and Ken Johnson, who became Rotarians in later years.

In January 1943, the Club finally adopted the standard constitution of Rotary International. This changed the method of electing officers, changed the annual meeting date and raised admissions fees. Rotary International said a Rotarian should not accept membership in any other service club.

The graduation exercises for air raid wardens listed a number of Rotarians and included Buddy Thornhill, Fred McDonald, Dohlen, McDowell and Cogswell. Jim Mahoney explained gas rationing, which went into effect July 22, 1942. Paul Buckholdt was appointed chairman of the *Keyway*. Until that time, it had been a one-man job.

Jim Bagwell was made scoutmaster of the Rotary-sponsored Scout Troop and George DeSaussure was chairman of the group. The troop included boys in the neighborhood of the Star Gospel Mission. The Club gave a leaders' cabin to the Boy Scout Camp.

Freeman Williams, who had attended more District Conferences than any other member over a span of 18 years, died

in 1942. Members Barkley, Hugh Lane, Roger Taylor, Edmunds, Grier Linton and Workman were reinstated to active membership as they came home from active military service.

Start: 83 members. End: 89 members.

1943–44: \$500,000 in war bonds purchased

Rotarians purchased over \$500,000 worth of War Bonds in the Third War Loan Campaign. Rotarians had five teams to sell over \$96,000 in Fifth War Loan Bonds. Rotarians also took wounded soldiers from Stark Hospital on Sunday afternoon automobile rides in spite of gas rationing.

There were 69 Rotarians in the local U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. There was a need for 15,000 additional workers in local essential industries to support the war effort, and Rotarians in nonessential war work were warned that they might lose employees.

Rear Admiral James, commandant of the Sixth Naval District, told the Club that the spirit of the Navy workers was excellent, and rumors of loafing in the Navy Yard were greatly exaggerated.

Rotarians started their own Community Chest by putting money into envelopes to be used by directors of charity agencies. Rotarians served Sunday dinner at the USO. Luncheon tickets started being collected at the door of the dining hall.

In April, the Club changed the meeting hour from 2 p.m. to 1 p.m. It wasn't easy due to a few "die-hards." Weekly classification talks started in November and many fine talks were given.

South Carolina Gov. Olin D. Johnston spoke at one meeting, and at another meeting, guests were not allowed because the Club discussed important internal affairs.

A new public address system was used for the first time in July. There were discussions pro and con as to whether representatives of labor should be proposed for membership, and it was decided not to open such a classification. Other business included: a sign was displayed in the hotel lobby telling of the Rotary meeting; a new emblem board was ordered; miniature Rotary banners were purchased for the first time; members not wearing their membership badges were fined; and members were given colored ribbons to wear each Tuesday showing 100 percent attendance.

Hans Koebig started the idea of giving past presidents a parchment, signed by all members, and the first one was presented to C. Bissell Jenkins, Jr. President Fred McDonald had an article in the Saturday Evening Post and started growing a Vandyke.

Start: 89 members. End: 99 members.

1944–45: Air traffic on the way

On July 4, 1944, the staff at the Francis Marion Hotel, thinking there would be no meeting due to the holiday, did not prepare a luncheon. The meeting of May 8, 1945, was cancelled to celebrate V.E. Day.

Other meetings were more eventful. The Club was told that Charleston was located in an advantageous position to take care of air traffic from the Azores, the Caribbean, South America and Europe. At another meeting, A.W. Allison deplored the state's neglect of its fishing wealth and cited the sturgeon as a lost fish. In 1880, 275,000 pounds of sturgeon were taken, compared to only 3,400 pounds in 1940, he said. J. Robertson Paul also spoke on the \$50,000 expansion program at the College of Charleston. Club members also were told that TV would go into operation as soon as the war ended.

During the year, the Club passed a resolution urging city officials to continue to make every attempt to curb venereal disease. Members also advocated slum clearance to facilitate downtown parking.

The Club had a great influence on the formation of a Pilot Club in Charleston. The Club also approached the 4th Brigade about beautifying Marion Square. A resolution was passed in favor of a movement to build a detention home for delinquent children.

A Greenville Rotarian, after a visit to Charleston, complimented Charleston on its program and the hospitality received. The Aims and Objects Committee suggested Rotary projects to develop civic pride, promote a community chest, develop youth recreation and make the city cleaner.

A.T. Smythe was made editor of the *Keyway*. Treasurer Oscar Schleeter complained about the cost of the *Keyway*. Honor certificates were presented for the first time to Rotarians who had 15, 20 or 25 years of continuous membership in Rotary. For the third year, Rotarians beat all the other civic clubs in a golf tournament. Tom Cockerham was chairman of an outstanding Ladies' Night.

Start: 99 members. End: 98 members.

1945–46: Changes ahead with end of war

The Club Service Committee presented the following objectives for the Club: increase membership to 125; raise attendance to 90 percent; increase senior membership; make the Club the most friendly in the district; give an orientation to new members; use more members for programs; and spread Rotary ideals in vocations.

A luncheon was held in honor of Secretary of State James F. Byrnes. A past president of Club #1, Chicago, entertained a wonderful Ladies' Night. Lady Astor was the guest speaker at a Ladies' Day meeting in March.

A speaker for National Airlines said air service was planned from Charleston to Europe. He also stated aviation would increase 500 percent in five years.

Tom Waring asked several Rotarians for opinions about the immediate future when Japan surrendered. The answers included: gas rationing would be stopped immediately; tires would be available; auto dealers would erect new buildings; buses would be more plentiful; and frozen food would become very popular.

In December, the territorial limits of Charleston Rotary were changed to permit the founding of a new club in North Charleston. This new club was chartered February 6, 1946.

The Club found out it was "dead broke" and sold its only asset, a Water Works Bond. Hans Koebig was responsible for the Club's first illustrated roster, and all members were assessed \$5.

Dr. Herman L. Turner stated the local Boy Scout Council had the best record in four Southeastern states. Robert Whitelaw said, "There were 621 organizations in Charleston which demonstrated

too many projects needed adherents, and partisans made for competition for manpower and money.”

Nineteen new members were added during the year, while four resigned. President John Walton was given a scroll inscribed with a sentiment of good will and gratitude for his services as president.

Rotary District 190 now contained only South Carolina clubs. Start: 98 members. End: 110 members.

1946–47: New industries come to Charleston

Under the direction of Arthur Field, Charleston activated 40 new industries in 14 months. And for the first time, electric appliances could be bought in Charleston at local distributors. Thomas Stevenson related how hard this had been to accomplish.

Jack Krawcheck presented a project to beautify Marion Square at a cost of \$10,000. The Club voted to take over this project and to raise the cost from the membership by donations.

The Club founded a new club in Summerville that was chartered Jan. 28, 1947. Charleston and North Charleston had an interclub meeting. The District Conference was held in Charleston, and the Club won the President’s award in competition with all clubs in the district. There was a \$300 shortfall in district funding, which the Club had to make up.

The *Keyway* secured second-class mailing privileges, which allowed it to save money on envelopes and postage. The first illustrated roster was distributed through the determination of Hans Koebig. Rotarians Nelson, Adams, Paul and Busby organized a quartet called “Loose Cogs” and entertained at many meetings. Henry Burdell, chairman of the Classification Committee, had printed for the first time a list of open and filled classifications. The Club voted to sponsor the first annual Merit Badge Show for the Boy Scouts, and Luther Rosebrock was named chairman.

Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary, died in 1947, and the Club sent a donation in his memory to the Rotary Foundation.

Two fine members, Dr. John Settle and Jake Weston, died. The Club led a campaign to get a stadium for staging athletic contests. Rotarians brought their children to a big Christmas party.

President Tyre Cockerham attended the Rotary International Convention in May 1947, and his expenses were paid by the Club. While attending the convention, he sent in his resignation and never returned to Charleston. Vice President George Paul acted for one month as the president.

Start: 110 members. End: 116 members.

1947–48: Best Club in district for second year

For the second consecutive year, Charleston Rotary won the President's award for being the best club in the district. For having the largest attendance at the District Conference, the Club won a handsome lectern. Every member contributed \$10 to the Rotary Foundation. Members contributed \$500 to the Service Fund, which needed money. The Club again amended the bylaws, and a speakers' bureau was organized with Rotarians offering their services to speak to other clubs and organizations.

The Club sent 36 children to Camp Harmon, sponsored by the Board of Health. The Club had a very successful event when it collected and sent 300 packages of clothes weighing a ton to the families of the Rotary Club of Charleville, France. Hans Koebig was the chairman for this event.

Eleven members of the Rotary Club of Columbia put on a local program and 24 of Charleston's members repaid the visit. The Summerville Club had 17 members put on our local program. Savannah Rotarians came to Charleston and conducted one of the best programs the club had received until that time. In return, 32 Rotarians and five Rotary-Anns made up a cavalcade to Savannah, where Ralph Meadowcroft spoke. He also spoke to Rotarians in Manchester, England, on the subject of American democracy. Rotarians were prominent in Community Chest activities with Lester Cannon as president.

The Club lost Billy Cogswell, Paul Thrash, Jim Gibson, Thomas Thorne and George Paul by deaths. Rotarians participated in a watermelon event sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the opening of a new bridge to the Isle of Palms. The Club had a sons and daughters day. Rotarian A.W. Allison was the

SPOTLIGHT: Club cleans up Marion Square

In the late 1930s, Francis Marion Square in downtown Charleston was called an eyesore by the local newspaper and a disgrace by local elected officials. In response to a growing public outcry, a committee of the Rotary Club of Charleston appeared before City Council in 1941 to help the city to take active steps to improve Marion Square.

By 1946, Rotarian Jack Krawcheck was appointed chairman of the Club's Civic Welfare Committee and asked to find a club project.

The next year, plans were announced to beautify Marion Square by spending \$15,000 on planting trees and shrubs and developing a promenade. The improvements, however, weren't to interfere with the square as a public mall and drill ground. After more than a half dozen studies, the Club adopted a plan.

Club members raised \$10,000 for the improvements. The City provided \$5,000. The work started on June 1, 1948, when the Club adjourned to the Square to plant a live oak tree in honor of Gen. Charles P. Summerall.

Over the next 11 years, a total of 10,500 shrubs, plants and trees helped to transform the "eyesore" into a beauty spot in the center of the city. S.C. Electric & Gas helped with the transformation by contributing 3,000 yards of topsoil.

A *News and Courier* article gave the lion's share of credit to Krawcheck for his hard work in seeing the project to conclusion. Other members of the committee included Col. Roger Taylor, Charles R. Allen, C. Lester Cannon, the Rev. Thomas Carruthers, A. Chambliss Connelly, Clarence O. Getty, C. Bissel Jenkins, J. Robertson Paul, A.W. Allison and Samuel Corbin. City officials and the Washington Light Infantry also were key cooperators in the project.

-- Jerry Nuss

first winner of the Charleston Challenges watch award for his outstanding community service. The Club established the Membership Committee as a secret entity to prevent outside pressure being put on those who selected potential members.

Start: 116 members. End: 120 members.

1948–49: Club performs service projects

The board of directors decided on a weekly order for the program to follow: music, fellowship, classification, Rotary information, vocational service, community service and international service.

Members wrote Christmas cards to Rotarians in foreign lands. They wrote to the County delegation requesting retrenchment from taxes, which were costing 9 percent of everyone's income. Rotarians donated clothes to the Junior League workshop. George C. Rogers, Jr., was awarded a Rotary Foundation Scholarship, and Rotarians supported the Boy Scout circus.

Preliminary steps were taken to organize a Rotary Club for St. Andrews. Members of the Boy Scout troop put on one program. Close to 400 attended the Ladies' Night, which had a new look with a nightclub atmosphere.

The new Charleston County management form went into effect on Jan. 1, 1949. There was a great need for drainage, lighting, policing and paving in North Charleston. Rotary was a big help in keeping the Ordnance Depot in Charleston. Hans Koebig's new home had many novel features and was the topic for many discussions. More than 30 members visited Fred Bailey's country home.

John F. Riley, one of the charter members, passed away, as did Robert Rosemond. The Club lost 11 members during the year and gained seven new members. Because the Club president wouldn't fine members, a barrage of accusations was set off that Rotarians had lost their manners and dignity. Many members opposed the attendance rules the Club observed.

Start: 120 members. End: 116 members.

1949–50: Members help start new club

Through the efforts of Hans Koebig, the St. Andrews Rotary Club was chartered on July 25, 1949. This was the fourth Rotary Club started by the Charleston Club. The *Keyway* paid tribute to Koebig, who was always ready to help, always optimistic and always generous with his support to worthy projects.

The Club sent 80 individually wrapped gift packages to Rotarians in Charleville, France, and Buddy Thornhill told the club about his visit there.

The Club helped organize seven new Cub Scout packs for 140 new Cub Scouts. Twenty-five Rotarians sang on Marion Square during the lighting of a Christmas tree.

The Club contributed to the purchase of a station wagon for the State Crippled Children's Society. The Rotary-Anns put on a program for the Club and made a big hit. The St. Andrews Club took over the Club and conducted one meeting.

The first Liar's Contest was held under the direction of Ron Reilly, and for the first time the following Rotarians admitted they were not telling the truth: Allison, Thorne, J. Rogers, Francis, Evatt and Bailey. Allison told the biggest lie.

Art Field wrote a very interesting article every week as the *Keyway* editor. He gave the advantages of Charleston for industry and proposed the establishment of an equitable, scientific system for assessing all property for tax purposes. The only remaining living man of the four who started Christmas Seals in 1907, L. Mitchell Hodges, spoke to the club.

In Charleston, Memminger High School was eliminated and the Avery Institute was closed. Rotary International dropped the slogan, "he profits most who serves best," because the word "profit" was misunderstood in foreign countries. The Club voted down a board recommendation that dues be increased to \$8 per month to include lunches.

With Jim Culpepper as chairman, Charleston played host to the District Conference. During the year, the Club became part of Rotary District 282.

Start: 116 members. End: 123 members.