

# The First Ever Delegation from China to the Rotary Convention in 1920

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The 2021 Annual Convention has been designated by Rotary International to be hosted by Taipei City, capital of The Republic of China (中華民國首都臺北市). This would be the second time for Taipei to be host of which would be supported by around 900 clubs from the 12 Rotary districts within the Taiwan Island. The previous one was already 26 years ago in 1994 when there were only 3 Rotary districts on the entire island. There were also voluntary supporters including the author from Hong Kong and Macao of District 3450.

The year 1994 marked both the “75th Anniversary of Rotary in Asia” as well as the “75 Years of Rotary Service in China”. “Gan-Bei in Taipei” (乾杯在台北) was the theme of the 85th Annual Convention held in Taipei on 12-15 June 1994. The registration figures recorded that 31,161 Rotarians and guests attended, representing 79 countries and 17 geographical areas.

One of the most heartwarming episodes of the entire convention was provided by the ceremonies highlighting Rotary’s “75 Years of Service in Asia”. The 96-year-old Percy Chu (朱博泉), Shanghai Rotary Club (上海扶輪社) President 1934-1935, was invited from Shanghai (上海) across the Strait to Taipei and spoke on the stage. He told the audience how he accompanied the Rotary Founder Paul Harris to plant a “Tree of Friendship” in Shanghai in February 1935. After Percy concluded his presentation, no one dared break the silence that descended on the hall, followed by an explosive ovation finally broke among those present.

But, the question of this topic is: When was the first ever delegation from China to the Rotary Convention? No hurry, here comes the story. Find the answers from below.

## From Municipal Shanghai to Atlantic City

It was exactly 100 years ago when Shanghai Rotary Club was only 8 months old in June 1920, out of the 60 members, the Club was represented by 4 of its “live wires” at Atlantic City, New Jersey, U.S.A., on 21-25 June 1920, to attend the 11th Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs (former organization of Rotary International before 1922), who travelled over 12,000 miles from Shanghai, China. It was a proud moment when

these 4 delegates from the Far East came down the aisle with the national flag of the Republic of China (中華民國).



中華民國國旗 (北京政府 1912-1928)  
*National Flag of The Republic of China (Peking Administration 1912-1928)*

These 4 delegates were Americans: Chief delegate “Tread” George L. Treadwell was a native of Massachusetts and assistant manager of the Chinese American Publishing Company (中美圖書公司). He was also the Secretary of the Shanghai Rotary Club and editor of 《Pagoda》, the club’s weekly news. Alternative delegate “Dinny” J. E. Doyle of Danvers, Massachusetts, was the city editor of the 《China Press》 (大陸報), Shanghai, the largest American daily newspaper in the Far East. He was former sporting and city editor of the 《Manila Daily Bulletin》 in The Philippine Islands. The other 2 delegates were: E. O. Baker, a native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was grocery salesman for the Conwell Brothers and treasurer of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai. He was also a delegate to the National Foreign Trade Convention in San Francisco. George R. Coleman was a Jerseyite. He was former foreign manager of the S.S. White Dental Company, Philadelphia, and eastern district manager of the Gaston, Williams & Wigmore, Inc., Classification “Dental Supplies”.

Atlantic City is a coastal resort city in Atlantic County, New Jersey, United States, known for its casinos, boardwalk, and beaches. It was incorporated on 1 May 1854, from portions of Egg Harbor Township and Galloway Township. Atlantic City inspired the U.S. version of the board game “Monopoly”, especially the street names. Since 1921, Atlantic City has been the home of the Miss America pageant. The 1920’s, with tourism at its peak, are considered by many historians as Atlantic City’s golden age.

## The Convention Prelude and Fellowship Activities

### *Sunday --- Rotary Church Service*

Practically every church in Atlantic City conducted special services on Sunday morning preceding the opening of the Convention. Many of the pulpits were occupied by Rotary clergymen from other cities who had come to attend the Convention and to whom invitations had been attended by local churches. The general text was “Service Above Self – He Profits Most Who Serves Best”, the sermons emphasizing the good that Rotary is doing in lifting the levels of business and professional life a little higher and inculcating a new spirit into the business world.

### *Monday --- Arrival and Registration*

Early Monday morning of 21 June 1920 the delegations began to arrive, many in distinctive costume. Many delegations which were not in costume, had purple hat bands giving the names of their home cities. By Monday noon it was estimated that several thousand Rotarians had arrived. Many delegations had brought bands with them to enliven the occasion.

The new arrivals found the city bedecked in gay and festive attire. The “Boardwalk” was decorated throughout its length with Rotary colours and large Rotary emblems and practically all of the shops along “the Walk” were specially decorated for Rotary week, the Rotary wheel and Rotary colours of course predominating in all of the decorations.

During the forenoon the Board of Directors of the International Association held a meeting at the Traymore Hotel. In the afternoon the district governors committee chairmen and nominees for district governors joined the general officers in a session of the “International Council” for a review for consideration during the Convention.



*Atlantic City Boardwalk as in 1920*



*The Steel Pier, Atlantic City, as in 1920*

The Steel Pier was the center of Rotary activities for the entire week. The Pier was probably half a mile long. At the entrance next to the Boardwalk were located the various administrative offices, while the convention hall itself---where all of the Convention sessions were held---was located on the extreme end of the Pier. Just beyond the building housing the administrative offices was the large pier ballroom and here the Fifth District had its pretentious headquarters--the "Hospitality Hut". Here each club of the 5th District had its own headquarters, appropriately decorated with its local banners and someone always in charge to give out information. No stone had been left unturned to cater to the desires and wants of visitors and on every side throughout the week were heard comments on the thoughtfulness and enterprise of the Rotarians of the 5th District. There were motion pictures, singing and other music and entertainment provided by talent from the various delegations.

Just west of the convention hall, in a small room, an exhibit of the publicity received during the 15th Anniversary Celebration of Rotary gave delegates and visitors an idea of the scope and breadth of Rotary. The exhibit consisted of editorials, special editions of newspapers and advertisements and miscellaneous clippings---all the result of one week's publicity. There was also an exhibit of large photographs of the International Rotary Headquarters offices at Chicago showing the different departments with an explanation of the work done by each department.

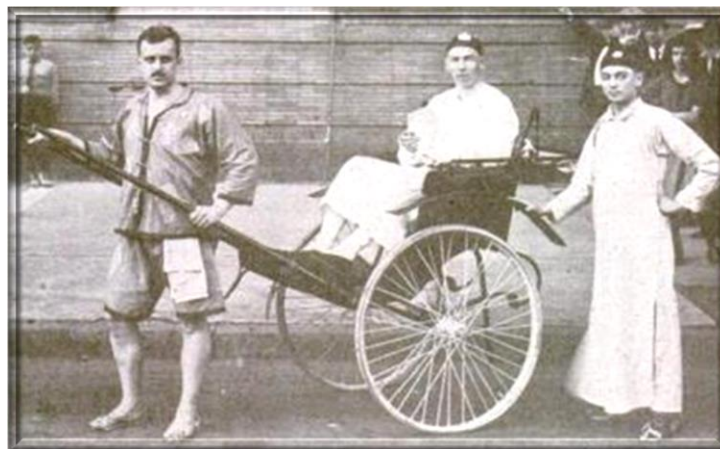


There was also a large map of the United States and Canada showing the 233 new clubs which had been organized during the past year.

At the 12th District Headquarters (Illinois) at the Marlborough-Blenheim Hotel, an interesting exhibit showed some of the work accomplished by the 12th District clubs during the past year. One section showed all newspaper publicity that had been received by the Illinois clubs during the year. The neighbouring 11th District (Indiana) had prepared at no little expense, a very interesting little souvenir for convention visitors. It consisted of a small booklet containing literary gems from Hoosier authors and poets and was given to the Rotarians with the compliments of "Indiana—Rotary's literary Belt".

The President's Ball, held on Tuesday evening on Young's Million Dollar Pier, was the big social function of the week. President and Mrs. Adams led the grand march and all of the dancing numbers were in Southern style in honour of Rotary's leader and excellent wife. The ballroom was large, the floor good, and the music excellent to that "a good time was had by all," even until the wee small hours of the morning. A beautiful chest of silver was presented to President and Mrs. Adams.

In the Rotary Parade, June 23 Wednesday afternoon, there were many beautiful decorated floats, with splendid music by the several bands furnished by various delegations. The delegates from China were dressed in Chinese costume as Mandarins and rode in real jinrikisha (rickshaw) which had been brought from China by the delegation. (*see photo below*)



*The China's delegation presented to the eyes of the spectators in their Mandarin costume. In this photo, Treadwell is seen on the left inside the rickshaw traces, while Doyle is the sitting passenger inside the carriage. Out of the box, one of the members held the camera and took the photo.*

On Thursday afternoon, the annual Rotary Vandeville show was presented, the entire performance being made up by talent furnished by various Rotary clubs. A feature of the vandeville was the one-act Rotary educational play, "The Spirit of Rotary", presented by the delegation from Honolulu, Hawaii. During the story of the play a young man---a new member of a Rotary club---in the face of strong temptation, was reminded of the Rotary ideals and

obligations by the presence in his office of a statuette, representing “The Spirit of Rotary”. During the action of the play there also took place the regeneration of a hard-headed, tight-fisted businessman of the old school---the young man’s employer---into a real Rotarian through the knowledge that came to him that the observance of the Golden Rule in business paid. The statuette used in the play was presented by the Honolulu Rotary Club to the International Association during the convention. The sculptor of the piece, as well as the author of the play, was Roger N. Burnham, a member of the Rotary Club of Honolulu.

Thursday evening had been set aside as “an evening for dinner parties” giving an opportunity for old acquaintances to renew their friendships and for the various delegations to hold reunions and celebrations. On this evening all of the cafes and dining rooms were crowded with Rotarians, many elaborate banquets being arranged for by the different delegations, the entertainment being provided for by talent from different Rotary clubs.

Throughout the week thousands of Rotarians and their ladies took advantage of the fine surf bathing and a morning dip in the ocean became quite a habit to a large number during their stay in Atlantic City. Opportunity was also afforded those so inclined to take short aeroplane flights from one of the stations near the Steal Pier.

The Philadelphia Rotary Club acted as hosts to thousands of Rotarians and their ladies who took advantage of the opportunity to visit Philadelphia while on their way to Atlantic City. Extensive sight-seeing trips were arranged to all points of special historic interest. The Club also provided excellent entertainment and all in all no stone was left unturned to make the visits of Rotarians enjoyable in every way.

The Rotary Club of New York City invited all convention visitors to register for a special trip up the Hudson on June 28 Monday following the convention as the guests of the Rotary Club. More than 2,300 Rotarians signed up for the trip. The party left the 42nd Street Pier on Monday morning on the Steamer “Clermont”. Each lady was presented with a box of candy with the compliments of the Hotel McAlpin. The first stop was made at Bear Mountain Inn, where dinner was served and the visitors entertained by the Logan Glee Club of the Utah Agricultural College. Leaving Bear Mountain early in the evening the trip was continued by moonlight up the river to West Point and then the return trip was made down the Hudson. The hospitality showed by the Club to their guests and the thorough preparations made for their comfort and entertainments were thoroughly appreciated by the twenty-three hundred visiting Rotarians and ladies.

Total Number of Member Clubs of the International Association (15 June 1920): 758

Total membership of Rotary Clubs (15 June 1920) (estimated): 56,800

Total number of registered in this 1920 Convention: men 4,545 / ladies 2,668 = 7,213

Representation of Clubs by Country in 1920 Convention: U.S.A. (597); Canada (33); Great Britain & Ireland (25);

Cuba (6); Uruguay (1); Panama (1); China (1) = Grand Total of Clubs represented = 664

## The First Plenary Session and Opening Ceremony

On Monday evening, 21 June 1920, the 11th Annual International Rotary Convention opened with an inspiring and spectacular "Rotary Pageant" directed by Raymond M. Havens, International Sergeant-at-Arms with a large corps of assistants. Although 8 p.m. was the time scheduled on the program for the assembly and seating of delegates from the United States, hundreds of Rotarians and their ladies began wending their way toward the Convention Hall at the end of the Steel Pier as early as 7 p.m. so that when the time came for the pageant the Conventional Hall was packed with practically two thousand people, standing in the side aisles, in the back of the hall, and on the outside on the Steel Pier.

The Convention Hall was beautifully decorated with United States flags and flags of other countries represented in Rotary, while the front of the stage to the left and right of the reading table was beautifully arranged with flowers and large potted plants. The first thing that met the eye upon looking at the stage was a large electrically lighted Rotary emblem, with many large streamers of the Rotary colours, glue and gold, draped around the emblem. Directly above these decorations were displayed beautiful silk flags of the various nations represented in Rotary.

As the thirty-piece band, stationed in the balcony, finished playing "Old Black Joe", two heralds made their appearance on the stage and amid the hush and expectant silence, with trumpets pointed straight ahead, one long, clear blast was blown followed immediately by the voice of Sergeant-at-Arms Havens as he announced "Welcome, Canadian Rotarian!" To the subdued, majestic strains of "The National Emblem", four beautiful girls, attired in costume representing Canada, marched four abreast into the hall. Following them at a distance of three paces came the official flag bearer, a member of the Atlantic City Rotary Club, in full dress suit and carrying the Union Jack, escorted by two United States sailors from the Philadelphia Navy Yard, uniformed in white ducks and carrying guns and cartridge belts. Immediately following the flag bearer and the two sailor escorts came the chairman of the Canadian delegation, escorted in turn by two Boy Scouts, one carrying a small Rotary flag and the other a white banner with the name "Canada" in large blue letters. Keeping step to the strains of "The National Emblem", the four young ladies marched onto the stage, taking their places at the back, while the flag bearer placed the Union Jack in the standard at the front of the stage and joined the members of the Canadian delegation who had taken the seats reserved for them in the front of the hall. The two sailors had separated as they reached the end of the center aisle, taking their positions one at the right and the other at the left on the main floor just in front of the stage. Each of the two Boy Scouts followed the sailor in front of him, taking a position just a pace in front of the sailor.

In like manner the other delegations entered the hall, each proceeded by four beautiful young ladies in native costume of the country represented by the delegation. The flag bearer---in each instance a member of the host club---was in full dress and escorted by two United States sailors, while the chairman of each delegation was escorted by two Boy Scouts. The appearance of each delegation, headed by its national emblem, was a signal for cheers and applause for the members of the delegation and for the Rotary clubs which had sent them across seas and across other natural or artificial boundary lines to attend the eleventh annual gathering of Rotarians. Delegations entered in the order in which their respective countries became affiliated in Rotary.

After the entrance of the Dominion of Canada, in the order of their appearance came delegations from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Territory of Hawaii (United States incorporated), Republic of Cuba, The Commonwealth of Porto Rico (American Colony), Oriental Republic of Uruguay, The Philippine Islands (United States Protectorate), Republic of China, Republic of Panama and Argentine Republic.

After the flag of Argentina had been placed in the standard, the Stars and Strips came into view borne at the head of the procession of International officers and their ladies. The appearance of the Old Glory was greeted with a burst of applause and cheering which lasted for several minutes. The band played "America", while the audience stood and sung the words.

The various flags formed a veritable mass of brilliant colour truly symbolic of the International character of Rotary and illustrate of its rapid spread to all parts of the world during the past decade.

### *Presentation of Rotary Leaders and the Shanghai Rotary Club*

Immediately after the International officers had taken their seats, Sergeant-at-Arms Havens handed the gavel to President Albert S. Adams, who immediately rapped for the order; simultaneously with this a number of doves, which had up to this time been concealed behind two large Rotary emblems, high up to the left and right of the stage, were released by hidden strings. The doves circled around for a few moments and finally perched above the stage. The large assembly was hushed as President Adams formally opened the 11th Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs.

### *President Albert S. Adams (Atlanta, Georgia):*

*The Eleventh Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs will now come to order. We will arise, while Father Thomas F. Ryan, of Chester, Pennsylvania, invokes the blessing of Almighty God on this Convention.*

After the blessing by Rotarian Rev. Thomas F. Ryan, the ladies who had taken part in the pageant marched from the platform amid the applause of the Rotarians. Following the ladies, the sailors and the Boy Scouts marched out of the convention hall. Sergeant-at-Arms Havens called upon the past presidents and other Rotary officials and their ladies to come to the platform. Alexander Wilkie, President of the British Association, led the procession of the officials.

### *President Albert S. Adams:*

*It gives me very great pleasure at this time to present to you President Charles H. Godfrey of the Atlantic City Rotary Club, who will welcome you to Atlantic City. President Godfrey. (Cheers and applause)*

After the welcoming address by Rotarian Godfrey, President Adams carried on to present and invited all these Rotary leaders to come up the platform to give brief notes, one by one:

- Arch C. Klumph (Cleveland, Ohio), International President 1916-1917, The Father of The Rotary Foundation



- John N. Dyer (Vincennes, Indiana), International First Vice-President
- Estes Snedecor (Portland, Oregon), International Second Vice President
- James F. Finlay (Chattanooga, Tennessee). International Third Vice President
- Rufus F. Chapin (Chicago, Illinois), International Treasurer
- Raymond M. Havens (Kansas City, Missouri), International Sergeant-at-Arms
- Chesley R. Perry (Chicago, Illinois), Secretary
- Dr. E. Leslie Pidgeon (Winnipeg, Canada), Dominion of Canada Delegation
- Alexander Wilkie (Edinburgh, Scotland), Governor of the 24th District, President of the British Association of Rotary Clubs
- Dr. Sotero Ortega (Cienfuegos, Cuba)

**President Albert S. Adams:**

We have a delegation here this evening that has traveled farther than any delegation that ever came to a Rotary Convention. There are four men representing the Rotary Club of Shanghai. *(Applause)* And I am taking the word of the Shanghai 《Rotary Pagoda》 for the statement: “Twelve thousand miles from Shanghai to Atlantic City.” *(Applause)* I am to ask Rotarian Treadwell to respond in a few words for the delegation from Shanghai. *(Applause)*

(Rotarian J. E. Doyle, one of the delegates from Shanghai stepped up the platform in response to an invitation from Rotarian George L. Treadwell, Chairman of the Shanghai Delegation and Secretary of the Rotary Club of Shanghai.)

**Rotarian George L. Treadwell (Shanghai, China):**

Mr. President, ladies and fellow Rotarians:

When Rotarian Tom Knight of the Du Pont Company went back Westfield, New York, just before leaving for China, he met there, among many others, 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. *(Laughter)*

“Strange,” she said, “I ever heard of that mission but I know you will do lots of good, Tom.”

*(Laughter)*

Few of you here tonight knew much of Rotary’s mission to China, but you know it will do lots of good, because it is Rotary, and because Rotary means service -- forward-looking, upward-looking, militant service. We have come 12,000 miles to tell you of Rotary’s mission to China, to tell you about a club that is the Rotary League of Nations in miniature.

Shanghai Rotary is in an international settlement, so-called, the only internationally governed settlement in the world, with a municipal council composed this year of eight British, one American, and one Japanese. The next higher governing power is the consular body, composed of the consuls and the consul-generals of various nationalities residing in the

settlement; thus, by being on foreign soil, internationally administered, it is readily seen that practically every question of public or private interest that comes up affects all nationalities.

The first question Shanghai Rotary faced, therefore, was what shall be our objects and membership, in view of this situation? And, although composed for the most part of Americans, we decided promptly to waive purely selfish, national considerations, and make the Shanghai Club a common meeting ground for members to be selected from various nationalities. So we formed our Rotary League of Nations, and we dedicated it -- from the points of view of community and Rotary interest -- to the fostering and maintenance of better international relations in China. We decided to sit down with other fellow and "swap" troubles, and get his point of view, and vice versa, so that we could better serve the municipality. That is why, when we came down the aisle tonight, we could carry not one flag; that is why the flag we did carry bears the words, "Rotary's International Club", and that is Shanghai Rotary's principal message to you here tonight: We want to visualize to you Rotary's international ideal, and the Shanghai Rotary Club represents those ideals, we believe, in miniature.

Shanghai Rotary has also another object: We want to see native Rotary clubs in China, plenty of them, and we look upon our club, therefore, as a nucleus, in its Chinese membership, of those who will be sent out later to form these native clubs, after we have created them a knowledge and understanding of Rotary. Give Rotary to other nations, yes, but give it carefully.

And now, having told you something of our make-up and aims, we come here tonight to catch and absorb, in so far as we can, that intangible, but infiltrating spirit that is Rotary, and that is spreading to all parts of the world. Rotary tonight can be truly said to cover a dominion on which the sun will never set, a dominion earth, working shoulder to shoulder through Rotary, to make for better international understanding, and for a better world to live and work in Rotary is an international, and universal force, and its foreign extension deserves the best moral and material support you, individually and collectively, can give it. *(Applause)*



*Group photo of the first plenary session of the 11th Annual Convention. All sessions were held in this Convention Auditorium on the Steel Pier at Atlantic City. Although unusually large, the convention hall could not accommodate the thousands of delegates and visitors from nearly seven hundred Rotary clubs. This picture shows only a portion of the convention hall.*