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1' to discover an aspect of Rotary history

Chesley R. Perry: Rotary's first general secretary

Chesley Reynolds Perry, a Spanish-American War veteran and former Chicago Public Library employee, played a pivotal role in shaping Rotary International.

Serving as Rotary's first secretary, Perry, known as "the builder of Rotary International," held the position for an impressive 32 years, the longest in the organization's history.

Initially appointed in 1910, Perry's part-time role evolved into a full-time executive position by 1912, overseeing the association's growth from 16 clubs in the United States to over 5,000 worldwide.

Perry established Rotary's first headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, and expanded its global presence by opening the first international office in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1925.

Despite announcing his retirement plans in 1940, Perry remained in office until 1942-43, training his successor, Philip C. Lovejoy.

Declining nominations for the role of RI president, Perry retired in 1942-43 but continued his leadership by serving as the president of the Rotary Club of Chicago in 1944-45.

