



# "The Downtowner"



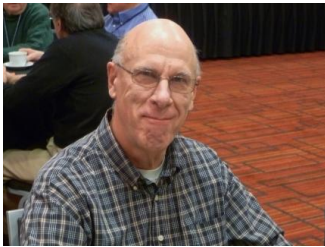
KIWANIS CLUB OF ROCHESTER

[www.kiwanisroch.org](http://www.kiwanisroch.org)

ROCHESTER, MN.

## July 13, 2018, Coming Programs

- July 19 4-H member guest
- July 26 Jerry Pruitt on Cuba trip
- Aug. 2 Mayor Ardele Brede
- Aug. 9 Gretchen Steer on experience of being lost in Yosemite
- Aug. 16 TBA
- Aug. 23 TBA
- Aug. 30 Club Business meeting



The Circle of Service

For July is Irv Nehring and Bill Kalmes

The Circle for August will be Charlie Graham, Del Lawson and Paul Austinson. (Circles should send Clare their programs as quickly as possible so they can be included in the Downtowner.)

Stay alert for signup opportunities online at [www.kiwanisroch.org](http://www.kiwanisroch.org)



### Expense Report:

Checks to Saints on Second for meals.  
3 Scholarship checks @ \$750 have been sent To the specified Universities. (Courtney Magerian, Alex Sedlack, & Madison Stevens)

Meetings will be at the Hilton next door to Saints on Second. This is the 'Default' meeting room.



### Paul Koeller

was speaker this past week. He is a local history buff, so tried to present a picture of Rochester (and the country) since 1914. It was interesting how so

many events and attitudes that we see today are repeating from the past.

He pointed out how the WWII was a boon to our economy as it was trying to emerge from the worst depression in its history.

Economically we and the rest of the involved world did well as women were brought into the general work force for the first time in this country. All of us were saving anything that could be used in the war effort. We saved cooking fats, tin foil, newspapers, magazines, and gas, tires, sugar, meat were all rationed.

Before the WWII and after WWI we saw the development of the Airplane, built the Panama Canal, miner strikes, the growth of labor unions. The Catholic Church banned the Tango dance on moral grounds; women got the vote, prohibition, development of the bra and other 'important' things.

The Babe Ruth career began, after WWI immigration was slashed, lynching across the south was a manifestation of racial hatred. Even in St. Paul we had invasion of the gangster element with the help of Chief Flannigan.

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Paul moved through some of Rochester's past with the development of Mayo Clinic and touched on importance of Henry Plummer in this growth. He had a photo of the Armory that was built in that 1914 time period. We all know how that became the Senior Center for many years and now being converted to some sort of restaurant and meeting place.

This was a nostalgic type of review, but important in this country's growth. People are similar in many ways and our attitudes change slowly. Nice job Paul.



We thought Dan Carlson had talent in writing, but we now know that he is a talented musician. He had alluded to his choir experience, but he gave us an entire program the week before 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday. He offered folk, and country music accompanying himself with the guitar. Nice job, Dan. You and former member Bob Fiss should get together. You might be a mean duet for us.

\*\*\*Next week July 19 we hope to be inducting Cindy Kerr and possibly one more new member.

\*\*\*At the request of Colleen, Irv and Clare will have financial material ready for the next meeting. Irv is the one who keeps Clare out of jail.

## Time to Smile



## 1880 History of Railroads and Pocket Watch Sale

If you were in the market for a watch in 1880, would you know where to get one? You would go to a store, right? Well, of course you could do that, but if you wanted one that was cheaper and a bit better than most of the store watches, you went to the train station! Sound a bit funny? Well, for about 500 towns across the northern United States, that's where the best watches were found.

Why were the best watches found at the train station? The railroad company wasn't selling the watches, not at all. The telegraph operator was. Most of the time the telegraph operator was located in the railroad station because the telegraph lines followed the railroad tracks from town to town. It was usually the shortest distance and

the right-of-ways had already been secured for the rail line.

Most of the station agents were also skilled telegraph operators and that was the primary way that they communicated with the railroad. They would know when trains left the previous station and when they were due at their next station. And it was the telegraph operator who had the watches. As a matter of fact they sold more of them than almost all the stores combined for a period of about 9 years.

This was all arranged by "Richard", who was a telegraph operator himself. He was on duty in the North Redwood, Minnesota train station one day when a load of watches arrived from the East. It was a huge crate of pocket watches. No one ever came to claim them.

So Richard sent a telegram to the manufacturer and asked them what they wanted to do with the watches. The manufacturer didn't want to pay the freight back, so they wired Richard to see if he could sell them. So Richard did. He sent a wire to every agent in the system asking them if they wanted a cheap, but good, pocket watch. He sold the entire case in less than two days and at a handsome profit.

That started it all. He ordered more watches from the watch company and encouraged the telegraph operators to set up a display case in the station offering high quality watches for a cheap price to all the travelers. It worked! It didn't take long for the word to spread and, before long, people other than

travelers came to the train station to buy watches.

Richard became so busy that he had to hire a professional watch maker to help him with the orders. That was Alvah. And the rest is history as they say. The business took off and soon expanded to many other lines of dry goods.

Richard and Alvah left the train station and moved their company to Chicago - and it's still there.

YES, IT'S A LITTLE KNOWN FACT that for a while in the 1880's, the biggest watch retailer in the country was at the train station. It all started with a telegraph operator: Richard Sears and his partner Alvah Roebuck!