

Wisconsin Optimism

Good {Morning/Afternoon/Evening} – welcome – glad to see you made the effort to be here – and most of all, thank you for **choosing** to be here! I know that you all could easily have chosen to be elsewhere – so, Thank You for the willingness to give up some of your time to learn about our great Optimist organization.

There is a section on the Optimist.org website that has the main items in the history of the organization, and the major milestones for Optimist International. To learn a great deal about our organization, go to: optimist.org; Members Tab; Administration Tab; History Milestone Tab. In fact anything you may want to know about our history is there!! Including the Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Purposes of the Optimist Club. I think all these are worth your time to read, so please do so at your convenience!

Today, I'd like to share with you some of the **milestones of Optimism in Wisconsin** – hopefully this will give you a new perspective and an appreciation of the rich Optimist history and legacy in the Badger State.

The starting date is 1911, the place Buffalo NY, some people had an idea – share time with others, make new friends, begin a sort of “networking” – this was a new and novel idea – and they called themselves “The Optimist Club of Buffalo.” Ultimately, over the course of about six weeks, 25 men formed this new club, and a writer noted, “Since we had adopted the name of ‘Optimist’ nothing could come but success.”

And success did come – also in NY, Syracuse and Rochester, clubs were formed. But the real unique and interesting phenomenon is that elsewhere in the US: Indianapolis, Louisville, and Milwaukee people joined to do the same thing – each of these groups did this without knowing that the other groups were forming as well! This really tells us that there was/is a need for optimism. The Indianapolis group even formed what they called “The American Optimists Clubs.” (1917)

In June of 1919, the first national convention of the independent Optimist organizations was held & the seeds of OI as we know it today were planted. The original clubs were: Indianapolis, Louisville, St Louis, Milwaukee, Denver, Kansas City MO, Kansas City KS, Chicago, Syracuse, Buffalo, and Saint Jo, MO.

So you can see that WI was in the Optimist movement from day one – and the other interesting fact is that all across the US, “optimist” clubs sprang up – independent of each other, yet each embracing the basic Optimist values of friendship, leadership and service. A way to give something back to community and kids!

Use this paragraph IF using quotes from “of Deeds & Dreams”

[Quote from “Of Deeds and Dreams” This was written in the early 1960’s, and many quotes from the 1920’s – just think how relevant they still are today!]

(A note, and maybe an apology to all present, please excuse the word “man” – try to consider it in the generic sense – text was written & quotes taken from very long ago)

Page 13, Page 31 -- These quotes are from the time period around our first national convention (1919) – just think how they still apply today and are very appropriate.]

Our motto –

The original – 1923 – Friend of the Delinquent Boy

As amended in 1924 (at the **Milwaukee** National Convention) –

Friend of the Boy

And finally, in 1973 – Friend of Youth.

A MAJOR step forward ----

1987 – The Optimist organization, became the first major service organization to admit women to full membership, voluntarily

A few more tidbits about Optimism in Wisconsin:

First Youth Club (Now JOOI) – Milwaukee, 1920

First Oratorical Contest Winner -

1928 from Milwaukee(Carlo Purpero)

Bike Safety originated in Wisconsin

Communication Contest for the DHH – Bud Fogel –

Green Bay area – 1980's

Our Creed – adopted in 1922 – Christian Larson – wonderful words - still very valid today – a few other thoughts by Mr. Larson, written before the Creed – “Of Deeds and Dreams” -- page 44

Now, the rest of the story, about Optimism in Wisconsin

The original District #9: North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Manitoba, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula

1952 – 14 Optimist Clubs in Wisconsin

1953 – Mel Reppen of the Madison Club built East & West Madison

1963/64 – Wisconsin was split off from the old District #9 – but kept the #9 -- The original clubs were: Waukesha, Superior, Oshkosh, Appleton, Beloit, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Madison (4), Racine (2), Kenosha (3), LaCrosse, Green Bay, Sheboygan, and Fond du Lac

1967 – WISUM Past Governor's Association formed – Dave Nolte

1974/75 – Wisconsin gets the UP (??) and becomes “WISUM”

1991/92 – Gov Ken Hornick appoints a committee to look at the possibility of splitting the WISUM District (130+ clubs, 6300 members, 24 Lt Govs, 2 Asst Govs, etc) – second largest district in OI behind MI); the committee members were: Dwaine Sievers (Cambridge); Dick Carlson (Wausau); Conrad Schoepp (Janesville); and Tom Deere (Green Bay)

1992 – May, the WISUM District votes to split into Northern Wisconsin and Southern Wisconsin; the OI Board approved the split in July 1992; August 1992 two Governor-Elect elected

10-1-1993 – The SWIS District is born – 75th Year of OI

The rest is current history!

Past OI Presidents from Wisconsin:

Leo Knoll 1925-26

Robert Sutherland 1930-31

William Newhouse 1967-68

Dwaine Sievers, Cambridge, OI President in the 2003-2004 Optimist Year

Jim Kondrasuk, Madison, OI President in the 2016-2017 Optimist Year