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Pioneer Westmont Builder Scoffs at Idea He Will Be Old on 91st Birthday in March

Reveals Town Was Named for Horse in '84

By EZRA S. PINCUS

Old at 91?

"No," said Walter Scott Stoy, Westmont pioneer, with a defiant wave of the hand.

Stoy, one of Haddon Township's earliest builders, house-movers and developers, shook his white head vigorously and asserted:

"I will never get used to being an old man! All my life I've created and I've built."

Ruddy-cheeked, Stoy will be 91 on March 21. He revels in recounting the days when a large part of Westmont was a 150-acre farm known as the "Stoy plantation."

Born 2 Blocks Away

Stoy lives at 5 Stoy ave., two blocks from where he was born. His home, as he put it, is "the last remnant of the plantation."

The veteran realtor explained that he personally marked off the family homestead and "developed 236 lots at spot cash."

The stocky man with the strong carpenter's hands recalled the curious story of how Westmont got its name, but first he adjusted the rocking chair against the living room wall so it wouldn't rock.

"In 1884," Stoy began in a clear, strong voice, "I petitioned the postmaster general in Washington for mail train service."

"I got a letter back denying the request because of the name of the town. It was called 'Roundtown' in those days, after Squire Round who used to live where Franklin P. Jackson 3d now lives, just around the corner on Haddon ave."

"The postmaster asked me to 'define' the name so we called a meeting at the school house. We decided on a new name—Glenwood. But the postmaster turned that down, too. They already had a Glenwood in New Jersey."

Another Name Rejected

"So we called another meeting and decided on Fairton. That name was rejected on the same grounds as Glenwood."

"Not discouraged, we called still another meeting and I was appointed a committee of one to choose a name. While writing the name 'Ramona' on the blackboard, I heard a commotion on the stairs and hesitated.

"Four young men swept into the room, laughing and shouting. 'We'll name the old town Westmont and don't you think we won't?'"

"It seems the men had been to West Chester, Pa., where they had each won \$100 bets on the failure of Westmont, a racing horse belonging to a scouring soap magnate, to run under a certain time."

"The men prevailed on me to erase Ramona and write in Westmont and that's how our town was named. Shortly after, we got our mail service."

Established Library

The name of Stoy is synonymous with Haddon Township history. Walter established a free public library and helped found Westmont Fire Company 1, of which he is the oldest living charter member.

Haddon Township itself was created out of Newton Township after Walter's father, John, successfully petitioned the Legislature for the split. After partition, his father headed the township committee for more than 40 years. His father also was president of the school board for 40 years.

A cousin donated the ground for the Stoy School, while the ground for the Haddon Avenue School was given by Stoy's grandfather.

The face of the Westmont pioneer glowed when he told of the part he played in the founding of Holy Trinity Church, Collingswood, in 1886.

Walt Whitman Enters

Stoy had begun the work as a member of Grace Church, Haddonfield. The foundation had been started but when it was half completed funds ran out.

It was here that Poet Walt Whitman entered the picture. Whitman had frequently borrowed Stoy's rowboat which he used to take out on Crystal Lake. One day Whitman approached Stoy and offered to pay \$10 for its use.

Stoy refused to accept the money. He quoted Whitman as saying:

"Well, Walter, I came out here to compensate you. Name what I can do for you and I will do it."

Stoy asked Whitman to read some of his works in Haddonfield. The poet agreed. A large audience attended. When the readings were over, Stoy asked the poet to hold out his hands. He put in them a handful of money that had been collected.

Poet Returns Money

Whitman, greatly moved, looked up at Stoy and said:

"Now, Walter, you hold out your hands."

Walt then returned the money with the stated wish that it be used in the building of the church.

Reflecting on that scene which took place 67 years ago before a hushed audience of 150 persons, Stoy said:

"The persistent retelling of that incident helped clear the smear of atheism from Whitman's brow, a stain that many had tried to place there."

The old builder unhesitatingly gave his recipe for a long life.

"I've never swindled anybody out of a penny, nor have I ever polluted my mouth with tobacco, liquor, profanity, tea or coffee."

Against Fried Food

Stoy, who said he learned to cook while in a hotel next door to the famous Alamo at San Antonio, Tex., warned:

"The frying pan is man's enemy. Fried food is poison."

For breakfast, the old gentleman invariably has skim milk mixed with boiling water, sweetened to taste. He also has cornflakes and coffee cake occasionally.

Stoy has some pie or fruit for lunch, while for dinner he cooks some meat with vegetables.

"I always boil my meat and I never follow any recipes," Stoy said. "I always cook by sense of smell—first when the water starts boiling, then when the meat should be turned over, and finally to see when it's been sufficiently cooked. The nose, not the fork, should be the guide."

"My favorite drink is water out of the spigot."

Wife Dead 15 Years

Stoy lives alone now, his wife having died 15 years ago and the couple not having had any children. As night drew on he slowly rose from his rocking chair and went from window to window lowering the shades.

He turned to answer one last question. On the basis of his long experience, he was asked, could he describe himself as an optimist or a pessimist.

"Young man," he said in a firm voice, "neither of those words are in my dictionary. I've just gone out and done things."

Chiroprodists Auxiliary To Meet Here Tonight

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Southern Division of the New Jersey Chiroprodists' Society will meet tonight at 8:30 o'clock in the Hotel Walt Whitman.

Mrs. Louis Sherman will preside.

Plans will be discussed for the convention of the state society and its auxiliaries, to be held April 23 to 26 at the Hotel Ambassador, Atlantic City.

Dr. Bertram Levine is president of the New Jersey Chiroprodists' Society. Dr. Jonas C. Morris of Audubon, is convention chairman. Dr. Stanley Hilbromner, of Camden, is southern division president.

15,000 Slips Seized In Phila. Number Raid

Philadelphia police swept down on a West Philadelphia house in a gambling raid on Monday and confiscated 15,000 slips indicating 303,000 number plays.

The raiders led by Inspector Gustav Blind and Capt. Lawrence Cochran entered the house on Peace st., near Race, and arrested Mrs. Viola Bailey, 49. Mrs. Bailey, according to Blind, was a front for the numbers bankers. She was charged, however, with setting up and maintaining a gambling house.

Pa. Ex-Banker Faces Sentence Friday

Pittsburgh, Jan. 27 (UP)—A former bank president will be sentenced Friday for embezzling \$600,000.

Ludwig R. Schlekot, 41, allegedly bought the Parnassus National Bank of New Kensington, Pa., after tampering with the books more than 16 years. He was president and owned controlling interest in the institution at the time of his arrest in August, 1951. Schlekot pleaded guilty to nine counts of misapplication and false entry.

Phila. Tavern Bandit Passes Up Canadian

A two-gun bandit took \$140 in the holdup of a tavern at 20th and Tioga sts., Philadelphia, Monday night, but passed up robbing patron Joseph Dolynek, 35, a visitor from British Columbia, when Dolynek explained that he was carrying only Canadian money.



MEMORIES of his friendship with Poet Walt Whitman are recalled by Westmont pioneer Walter Scott Stoy as he sits at a desk made in 1828 from a cherry tree on the old "Stoy plantation."

—Courier-Post Photo

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