

## *Opening of Hotel Walt Whitman Marks Completion of Task Undertaken by 370 Citizen-Salesmen and Beginning of New Era in Camden's Civic Life*

Co-operation of Business Men, Through Chamber of Commerce, in Raising \$1,250,000 in One Week  
Made Hostelry Possible. Hotel to be Headquarters of Chamber and Service Clubs

**W**ALT WHITMAN, far-seeing prophet that he was, a great poet of world renown, would indeed be proud of the city he loved—Camden—and the folks whom he knew so well and who knew him, if he could come back and witness the beginning of a new era in Camden's civic life with the opening of the hotel which bears his name.

September 14, 1925—the opening day—will go down in the history of Camden as an unusually memorable one for with the throwing open of the doors of a modern hotel for which 370 Camden business men worked is an achievement of which all are proud—tremendously so.

To the 370 citizen-salesmen belongs a great portion of the credit for this new monument to Camden's progress for it was they who by their diligent work made it possible. They it was who worked a week—February 4, 1924, to February 11,—and raised \$1,250,000 in Camden and South Jersey with which to build the hotel.

From early morning until late at night these salesmen worked, going from business office to business office and from home to home selling Camden of the future through the medium of a fine, modern hotel suited to the city's needs.

And they found the Camden folk ready and willing—1941 of them—to invest their money in a project which was then considered Camden's greatest need.

The hotel will be the headquarters of the Camden Chamber of Commerce and the South Jersey Automobile Club, Inc., these organizations occupying space on the mezzanine floor, New Broadway and Lawrence Street corner. The service clubs—Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Y's Men—will hold their weekly luncheon meetings and entertainments, from time to time, in the hotel. The Camden Real Estate Board will also hold its meetings in the hotel.

That the Hotel Walt Whitman will be the new centre for Camden and South Jersey around which the social and business life will turn from the opening date on goes without saying, and all are pleased at the prospect.

The opening wedge for the hotel was furnished by Mr. Eldridge R. Johnson, president of the Victor Talking Machine Company. It was Mr. Johnson's wish that the Chamber of Commerce of Camden—the city in which he made his start, the city in which is housed his giant talking machine plant—should have a home of its own, and for that purpose Mr. Johnson announced that he would present the Chamber of Commerce with \$100,000.

This gracious gift for Camden's business and civic life was received with general acclaim by the officials of the Chamber of Commerce.

When Le Roy A. Goodwin was elected president of the Camden Chamber of Commerce in April, \*1923, and while working out the program of work in which the Chamber should engage during his administration he made the suggestion that Camden's greatest need was a modern hotel.

Accordingly this project was placed on the program and shortly thereafter an Executive Committee of 45 was formed to make a full investigation. Two surveys of Camden were made as to the possibilities for success for a modern hotel. One of these was made by the Hocken-

bury System of Harrisburg, expert hotel financialists, and the other was made by the United Hotels Company of New York, the parent corporation of the American Hotels Corporation. The latter is operating the hotel.

The survey made by the Hockenbury System recommended a 200-room hotel and the one made by the United Hotels was for a hostelry of more than 260 rooms.

After it was shown that a modern hotel would be successful, based on the experience of such concerns as those which made the survey, Mr. Eldridge R. Johnson was asked if he would be willing to have the Chamber of Commerce invest the \$100,000 which he had agreed to present in a project of this kind. Mr. Johnson replied that not only was he willing to do so but that he would invest \$50,000 of his own money in the enterprise

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MR. ELDRIDGE R. JOHNSON