Not St. Peter but Judas Is Last of Apostle Trees

By GARNET WAREFEL

For the sake of sentiment it would be nice to record that several hundred persons gathered Thursday at Gladwin Park, and with proper and touching ceremonies paid homage to St. Peter, a tree.

No common tree by any stretch of fancy, but a tree tied up with the earliest history of Detroit and the lone survivor of an ancient orchard of 12 giant pear trees planted in the park by an early French settler and named after the 12 Apostles.

However, for the sake of accuracy, it must be told that the tree around which an almost devout group assembled to have a part in the planting of its seedlings, is not St. Peter, but Judas—the tree that was set apart from the other 11.

Under the Detroit Historical Society, the Jesuit order, local garden clubs and city officials who, with the cooperation of the City School Board, took their places in the very shadow of the old Water Works Tower and near the dying tree, were first apprised of the switch from St. Peter to Judas, when, as George W. Stark, the Old Timer of the Detroit News, in his opening master-of-ceremonies talk, made the announcement.

CONSTERNATION FELT

To say the news was a surprise is putting it mildly, for in the faces of the men, women and children, came looks of consternation as if the very mention of the name of Judas robbed the occasion of some of its glory.

It might have been that the persons assembled, and many others, would have gone on until the end of the days believing the tree, now beautiful with orange blossoms, to have been one of the several strokes of lightning and nearly filled with cement, was St. Peter. But because a certain announcement was made on WWJ—The Detroit News, last Sunday and heard Stark's Old Timer broadcast about the tree plans, all that has been said.

She is Mrs. Howard Lewis French, 70 Kerby road, and she knew Judas from away back.

Mrs. French was present at Thursday's ceremonies and explained to the assembled that she was born on the Gladwin Park formerly Waterworks Park, her grandmother, John E. Edwards, having designed and built the first water tower on the grounds.

SWING IN TREE

"My mother was Florence Edwards Nash," she went on, "and she had a swing on that tree which we knew as Judas, I had a swing on it when I was a little girl. My grandfather built that red brick house going to the one nearby and in which now lives Harry W. Van Dyk, superintendent of the pumping station. I grew up in the shade of these trees, and my grandfather told my mother many times that the 12 Apostle trees were planted in a circle where the pumping station now stands. He used to say that Judas stood apart according to the Bible and I KNOW this is Judas.

Mrs. French pointed out that the tree had been hit by lighting many times, and that although everything else has been done to prolong its life, it is dying.

"St. Peter of Judas, as the case may be, will live on in the 20 newly directed trees, according to the ceremonies, Mrs. French helping to plant the first, less than a stone's throw away from its 45-foot forebear."

C. E. Brewer, general superintendent of the Department of Parks and Recreation, presided and introduced Stark, who, after explaining the St. Peter-Judas mixup asked Fr. A. H. Poelker, executive dean of the University of Detroit, to speak.

SYMBOL OF PEACE

It will be remembered it was a Jesuit priest who had to do with the planting of the 12 Apostles, and Fr. Poelker spoke of the tree being symbolic of peace and its especial significance now.

Ruth Mosher Place, Garden Editor of The News, spoke about the growing of the tree as a thing of one in Mexico. She urged the audience, particularly that part made up of children, to learn trees and to love them.

Stark introduced Orla B. Taylor, trustee of the Detroit Historical Society, who spoke briefly. There were other introductions and then Mrs. French, the revealer, was presented with a cutting from the Judas tree by Mrs. Walter O'Hair of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

As Mrs. French turned the first showy sift of dirt about the seedling the sun slipped off the shadows of the great trees nearby and gave its special benediction on the May Day—a good sign for which young and old had assembled.

Nine other seedlings were planted in Gladwin Park and 16 more in Gabriel Richard Park.