

Black Oak Is One of Westford's Largest Trees

by Gordon B. Seavey

WESTFORD — Its fall crop of acorns has dropped, spaced too thickly on the ground that a person cannot move a step without crushing one or more. Its dark green leaves soon will turn to a rich brown as autumn comes once again, as it has for probably two centuries, to one of Westford's great trees.

This tree is the giant black oak which almost fills the lawn space between the J. V. Fletcher Library and the First Parish Church. It takes a 14-foot string to go around its girth at breast high and its spread is 85 feet, ten feet wider than its height.

Rev. George E. Downey, who can watch the swaying of its branches from his nearby pulpit, estimates the tree's age is closer to 225 years and was growing at the time the present church was built in 1795.

The range of the black oak extends all over the eastern half of the country, excepting upper Maine. It makes up about 15% of the stand of all oaks. The bark, because of its age on this tree, is dark gray, broken by deep furrows into ridges that are transversely cut into block-like strips.

Its leaves are interesting, too, because they are usually of seven lobes, and the tiny bristles on the tips makes it easy to identify this species.

Another giant Westford tree is the horsechestnut near the entrance to the Center post office. Here again the ground is littered with the fall of its nuts. Also, nearby is a great poplar, one of several ornamental trees which shaded the original Abbot homestead in town.

Hidden deep in Nashoba Woodlands is probably one of

the largest white pines in this area, according to Forester William Esters. It is 85 feet tall, with a circumference of nearly ten feet.