

Westlawn Cemetery beautification

By Gordon B. Seavey

WESTFORD Recognizing the need for an uplifting of the general appearance of one of the town's oldest burying grounds members of two prominent Westford families have contributed to a special fund to beautify Westlawn Cemetery.

Work was completed for the season when the first snow storm fell. The project consisted of the planting of more than sixty trees, flowering trees and shrubs. The new additions are expected to take hold this winter and be ready for rapid spring growth.

Originally called the West Burying Ground, the area consists of a triangular plot of nearly two acres. It lies between Concord Avenue (Route 225) and Country Road, Country Road formerly called Cemetery Road lies along the bed of the old Acton & Nashua Railroad.

Advised by Charles Laughton of Laughton's Garden Center native trees and shrubs were selected that would be compatible to those used in Colonial days when the cemetery was laid out. Thirty white pines were set alongside the wire fence on Concord Avenue, a barren boundary of the cemetery. Giant pines already border Cemetery Road. The stock was grown in Laughton's Westford nursery.

Other species planted included lilac, forsythia and juniper, as well as American arborvitae. The custom of flying the U.S. flag was reactivated. Noted as good farmland, the Cemetery Commissioners expect the planting will soon go a long way toward beautifying the grounds, for too long slightly neglected.

Old Graves

The West Burying Ground contains graves of many of the town's earliest settlers, mainly farmers who found the area was fairly free from boulders and heavy gravel, and the sandy soil was conducive to growing grass and white pine timber.

These forebears are buried either in tombs or regular burial with slate headstones. Such familiar names are Prescott Patten Proctor, Robinson Carver, Hildreth, Day and Parker are carved in stone.

Here is the family lot of Colonel John Robinson, Westford's Revolutionary hero who led 130 minutemen to Concord on April 19 and later distinguished himself at Bunker Hill and through out the war.

Those purchasing as memorial gifts the nursery stock are the Precious and Day families.

Cornelius Precious and Annie Brown came to this country in the late 1800's from England to work in the Forge Village mill. He was a supervisor for the Abbot Worsted Company, she a hobbling girl. Their subsequent marriage produced three talented daughters, today all remembered in town. They were graduates of the Academy.

The older Caroline is now Mrs. Daniel Newman of Chatham, Pamela (Daisy), now Mrs. Peter Perry the wife of a former superintendent of Westford Schools and now making their home in Harwich, and Mildred (Mrs. Carl Haussler) of Cranston, R.I., whose husband is buried in Westford.

Representing the Day family is Mrs. Eleanor Colburn Fletcher, active in the Golden Agers. Her

forebears were Isaac Day who came from Ipswich and married a local girl Lucy Dutton, in 1796. The Days in the past were very prominent in Westford.

Memorial Parade

Mrs. Newman recalls for the family that when girls in the house next door to the Cameron School their teachers would parade the students, class by class in double file, to Westlawn for Memorial Day exercises.

En route she reports, we were allowed to break ranks in order to pick some roadside flowers to add to our offerings. I recall my favorite was the pale blue crow's foot violet.

Under the direction of their teachers, Principal Lelitia V. Ward, Mary A. Garvey, Abbie M. Blaisdell and Eva C. Pyne, the youngsters would sing such Civil

War reminders as "Tenting to-night" and the "Blue & the Gray."

The cemetery commissioners recommend that more plantings be made here if funds become available. They wish to place old-fashioned white wooden gates at both entrances where previous ones were removed or vandalized. According to Clayton Dearth, chairman of the department, additional memorial gifts would be welcomed.

Wilfred J. Tousignant, the superintendent, reports that practically all lots have been disposed of. Those spaces remaining in Westlawn are being reserved for relatives of those already buried in the cemetery, whose earliest graves goes back to the pre-Revolutionary days and the founding of the town in 1729.



Prescott family lot in Westlawn Cemetery is marked by this horse mounting block removed from the front of the old Prescott Tavern in Forge Village.