Westford Wanderings

By Gordon Seavey

Although Poet Joyce Kilmer has been dead for over three generations, a bit of his poetry about "Trees" still lingers. Trees are something that Westford has plenty of – and there was one time that a person in the Center could gaze to the west and north and view Wachusett, Monadnock and the Uncanoonuc Mountains. But the fields and apple orchards have been replaced with trees, trees and trees and about the only unobstructed views may be had from isolated locations or the tower of the old meetinghouse and the Abbot School

About the time Kilmer was writing his poetry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture was encouraging people to save specimen trees along the highways by placing special markers on them.

There was also a plan to give children potted seedlings to take home and plant on Arbor Day These were planted, hit and miss, in many areas.

Why the species selected was the Northern Catalpa, a common variety centered along the Mississippi River mid-section only and not native to New England, we were never told. Nevertheless, one can spot some of these trees, now magnificent specimens, in many parts of town. Proof that Westford soil likes the Catalpa!

It is an irregular and picturesque tree with large decorative heart-shaped leaves and conspicuous flower-clusters in season. When in full bloom, no other tree can quite equal it for beauty. Watch for it next June or July.

The bark on the trunk is thick and light grayish brown.

One of the best examples of the Catalpa in town is in front of the home of Mabel M. Prescott at 32 Boston Road where the sun has blessed it for many years. Another, at the old Colburn homestead, now owned by Frank T Vennard, Jr, at 26 Flagg Road, and a third in the old Hillside Cemetery in the north part of town. Does anyone remember planting these?

Should you like your memory jogged about Kilmer's famous poem, here it is.

"I think that I shall never see

A Poem lovely as a tree

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest

Against the earth's sweet flowing breast