



A POST CARD of unknown date published by J. Herbert Fletcher depicts a heavily tree-lined, unpaved Main Street northeast of town hall. (Courtesy June Kennedy)

# Ornamental Tree Association

## Vision for future

By June W. Kennedy

**I**n 1871 the Ornamental Tree Association was formed in Westford. At the 1876 centennial address here in town, Rev. Hodgman reflected with pride upon the Association's planting of 100-150 trees in the center for further generations to enjoy. They were mostly of the sugar maple variety. (Indeed it is time for this generation to follow suit with more maples and fruit trees.)

Hodgman heartily suggested that sidewalks from the Centre of Westford be laid in behalf of the ladies who must contend with armloads of packages, long skirts and mud. Actually it was in March of 1912 that the town finally voted to raise and appropriate \$300 — \$100 to be expended in each of the three villages of Graniteville, Forge Village and Westford Centre for the construction and grading of sidewalks.

In light of the removal of many old buildings, broken fences, etc., he successfully recommended the Association be called the Village Improvement Society. Fortunately, his next proposal was not carried out: "I think that in this centennial year we ought to redeem that beautiful plot of ground with its fringe of trees from the disgrace and vulgarity of being called common, as if it were only a place for dog fights or cat concerts. Let us call it a park and

give it the name of some worthy and public-spirited citizen."

To this writer, the very name common connotes ownership by every man — and rightfully so!

In his address of 1876, Rev. Hodgman called upon the spirit of 1976. His projections, while prophetic for his time, seem almost amusing in view of the many technological, social and cultural changes of the past 100 years.

"We presume, Sir, you can report to us the erection of one or more fine summer hotels, somewhere on the west end of Main Street, of course, to which the elite of Boston, New York and Graniteville resort to spend the warm season. O, yes; and the principal streets are all paved and lighted with gas, the real article, and none of your gasoline or paraffine.

"And starting from the post office a solid brick edifice, three stories high, standing opposite the residence of Allan Cameron 3rd, two lines of horse-cars of the most approved pattern run every 15 minutes to stations on the Stony Brook and on the Nashua and Acton Railroads. (Cameron's residence today is Westford Nursing Home.)

"I suppose you can tell us of the monument in Abbot Park [Westford Common], to the memory of Lt. Col. Robinson. Yes, it is a just and fitting tribute to a brave soldier and a true patriot.

It is now moss-covered and weather-stained."

In reality, 200 Westford citizens came back from the 1875 Concord celebration all inspired to erect a commemorative monument to Col. John Robinson and the Westford patriots. On May 22, 1875 the town of Westford defeated the proposal 78-51.

It was in 1968 in anticipation of the Bicentennial, that the Westford Minuteman erected the plaque to honor the soldiery.

Hodgman continued, "The people of Westford have done wonders within the century in the line of education. They have never voted less than \$3000 a year for schools. Every one of these has a printing press of its own, and the pupils are taught to compose types as well as essays, and a daily paper is issued, giving a synopsis of the day's work. Journalism is a distinct study, and so are drawing, painting and sculpture.

"A well-equipped and elegant building for the Westford Academy was erected near the middle of the century [actually in 1897] — east of Abbot Park, with ample grounds and all needful appurtenances. It is truly an ornament to the town. It occupies a lot running from street to street, and the horse-cars pass it in front and rear."

June Kennedy is a Westford resident and author of "Westford Recollections", a series of historical vignettes and photos.