

## **Laclede Groves History Written by Clotilde Pottebaum in 1997**

The last decade of the twentieth century brought us to live in the patio homes in the Village on the campus of Laclede Groves located in Webster Groves, Missouri. Perhaps when one moves into this city, one is affected by the passion of its long-time residents for history, and by the enthusiasm of their celebrations in 1996 of being one hundred years old. With the increase in length of one's personal historical background and, after the move into a new home occurs, one develops renewed interest and curiosity about those people who were influences from the past and helped create this land as we know it today. Who was it that came before us? When were they here? What did they do to make this vicinity as we find it? Where did Laclede Station Road get its name? Why are the streets in the Village identified as Eckrich Place, Imse Drive, and Lohmann Forest Lane?

We have learned from recorded history that it was the Indians who first roamed this territory at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and it was from the Indians that we have the names. Although the lower Mississippi River was discovered by the Spaniard, Hernando de Soto in 1541, it was not until 1673 that Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet, coming from Quebec, explored the upper Mississippi and discovered the Missouri. In their written reports, they used the same names as the Illinois Indians who spoke the Algonquin language. In Algonquin, "Missi" means big and "sipi" means river. Missouri-sipi comes from "missi" for big, "souri" for boat and "sipi" for river. Navigation in the rough and swift waters of the river required big boats formed of hollowed out logs. The light birch bark canoes used on the eastern rivers were found to be inadequate for these turbulent waters. In addition to exploration, the two Frenchmen from Quebec were interested in buying furs from the Indians and converting them to Christianity.

Exploration, settlement and trading activities continued for the next one hundred years and led to the official founding date of St. Louis, February 15, 1764. The founder was a business man who, was delighted with the location by the two rivers, and because of the site and central location, foresaw its advantages for forming settlements. This founder was Pierre Laclede-Liguest and is best known as Laclede. The French government granted him and his company exclusive trade rights for eight years with all the nations west of the Mississippi, among which were the tribe of Missouri Indians. Laclede designed the plan, laid out the blocks for his village, and sent Auguste Chouteau with thirty men to begin building the first houses. Laclede was greatly respected, conducted business with skill and prudence. He maintained his business and home in the area some called Laclede's Village or Post. He made many trips up the Missouri River to collect furs from the Indians and

down the Mississippi River to sell the furs to the French at New Orleans. In 1778, when returning from one of his trips to New Orleans, he became ill and died at age 54. He was buried on the banks of the Mississippi near the mouth of the Arkansas River, but his grave was lost in the wilderness and has never been found. Although there is no monument marking Laclede's grave and Laclede's Village or Post was given a new name, Laclede has been honored with statues, streets and businesses named after him.

Laclede's Village was eventually named after Louis the Ninth, King of France. Louis the Ninth was described by one English writer "as the ideal king of the middle ages". Among many other qualities, he was known for his piety, his charities, and the establishment of hospitals and institutions of mercy. He died in 1270 at age 56 years and was canonized in 1297 as Saint Louis. After this, many churches in France were dedicated to him and the names of these churches were carried onto the missions in the colonies. When the first mission was established on the block reserved for a church by Laclede, the priest, Father Meurin, named it after the king-saint and eventually it became officially known as St. Louis. This St. Louis the Ninth is remembered at Laclede Groves with a stained glass window in the south transept of the chapel.

The rivers that Laclede valued for their transport abilities made St. Louis the center of transportation. For many years, the only other way to travel was by horses or horse-drawn wagons, buggies, or stage coaches. Railroads were slow to come but eventually, in 1849, United States Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who lived in St. Louis and was a great champion of railroads, introduced a bill in Congress to acquire land in building a "Pacific Railroad", a railroad from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean. It was on July 4, 1851, that the first spadeful of ground was dug and a celebration held to start the actual work that was to make St. Louis a great railroad center. By 1855, the Pacific Railroad reached Jefferson City. As the construction of the railroad progressed westward from St. Louis, stations were built along the way. One stop was called Benton Station. Another stop was named after the founder of St. Louis, Laclede, and the path which led to the railroad station became Laclede Station Road. Hence, we have the name of the four lane street for automobiles on which Laclede Groves is located. When the Missouri, Osage and Dakota tribes of Indians inhabited the area west from St. Louis to the Meramec and Missouri Rivers, they called it Dry Ridge. An Indian mission was established by Jesuit missionaries at the mouth of a small river known as River day Pair or River of the Fathers, after the Jesuit fathers. Eventually, six thousand acres of land west of River day Pair came under the ownership. of Gregoire Sarpy. He was a Frenchman who conducted a large fur trading business in St. Louis with the Chouteaus. One of these Chouteaus was Auguste, who had come with Laclede when he chose the west bank of the Mississippi for the site of his establishment and is sometimes referred to

as the co-founder of St. Louis. It was in 1802, from the last Spanish Lieutenant Governor, that Gregoire Sarpy obtained his land grant west of River day Pair or Rio de los Padres as the Spanish called it. Although this land was approved by Congress and surveyed in 1818, it was refused by the Federal Land Commission because it was shaped like an "L" and was not one league square. Litigation continued until 1842 when Congress gave final confirmation. It was in the 1840's that French, Spanish, and English became settlers in the area. Sarpy's land west of River day Pair was eventually divided along Laclede Station Road.

The fervor and zeal of the missionaries who established an Indian mission at the mouth of the River day Pair after prior discovery of the Missouri River, can be recalled at Laclede Groves in the form of St. Francis Xavier, the middle stained glass window in the south wall of the chapel. Francis was born in 1506 in Spain. While studying in Paris, he was motivated by St. Ignatius Loyola, who started the order of the Society of Jesus and became a Jesuit missionary. He became known as the Apostle of the Indies because of the missions he established in the Middle East and in Japan. He died off the coast of China in 1552. In the booklet Description of the Chapel, Lutheran Convalescent Home, Rev. Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn states, "The great Lutheran hymn-writer, mystic and missiologist Philip Nicolai (1556-1608) has generous praise for the genuinely evangelical nature of the missionary witness of St. Francis and his companions".

The opening of its route between St. Louis and Kirkwood in 1853 by the Pacific Railroad, facilitated transportation. Around this time a minister from the First Presbyterian Church in St. Louis by the name of Rev. Artemus Bullard had the idea to start a school somewhere in the county for boys and young men. He convinced two businessmen to donate land and build a school building on the top of the hill north of the newly opened Pacific Railroad. The school was opened in 1854 and Rev. Bullard gave it the name Webster College after Senator Daniel Webster of Boston, a man he greatly admired. Webster was educated at Dartmouth College where he was an ardent student who became a teacher and then a clerk in a Recorder's office. He became interested in law and politics and was known for his gift of oratory. After practicing law, he was elected to the House of Representatives and later, after a move to Boston, to the Senate.

It was Bullard's Webster College that gave its name to a railroad station and to the surrounding community. So, when traveling on the Pacific Railroad west from St. Louis, one could make a stop not only at Benton Station, but also at the River day Pair Station, the Laclede Station, the Webster College Station and onto Kirkwood and westward. Although Bullard's Webster college was closed prior to the Civil War, the school building remains standing as part of Edgewood Children's Center at 330 North Gore and is known as Rock House. The surrounding community became

Webster until it was discovered there was another post office called Webster and the word Groves was added because of the beautiful oak, maple and elm trees residents until 1896. In the years to come with the annexations of 1940 and 1944, the city increased by 486 acres. It was in the 1940's that the city limits were extended to include acreage south of Big Bend along Rock Hill Road to U.S. Highway 66 (now Watson Road) and east to Laclede-Station Road. With the passage of time, Gregoire Sarpy's land west of its division at Laclede Station Road has become the City of Webster Groves. The land acquisition of the 1940's is referred to as South Webster and includes the 64 acres of Laclede Groves. Some of the city of Webster Groves links with the past were lost in the 1960's with the construction of Highway I-44. The residents of South Webster strongly opposed the building of the highway but, as we can see today, lost their battle.

One portion of the Gregoire Sarpy land grant eventually became the property and farm land of Mr. Joseph Sheets. In 1916, the land that was to become Laclede Groves as we know it, was donated to the Missouri Sisters of Mercy by Mr. Sheets in gratitude for their kindness and care while he was a patient in St. John's Hospital. The Sisters of Mercy is an order of Catholic women founded by Catherine McAuley in Dublin, Ireland in 1831. The distinctive feature of Mother McAuley's group is that its works are the Works of Mercy and its constitution combines the active with the contemplative life. Their social work included education of poor children, child welfare, care of the sick, visitation of prisons, care of the aged, education and homes for young girls. Their social welfare program had its beginning in the United States in 1843 at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was in 1856 that a foundation was made in the city of St. Louis, Missouri.

Considering the land from Mr. Sheets a providential gift, the Sisters decided to build a new Motherhouse and Novitiate on the property. It was in 1919 that the convent was completed and began use as both the Novitiate for the Sisters of Mercy and St. Catherine School for Girls. The name given to the convent was St. Joseph. At the entrance of the convent was a white statue of St. Joseph and engraved on the pedestal for the statue were the words, "in grateful remembrance of the generous Christian charity of Joseph H. Sheets, donor of the spacious acres to the Sisters of Mercy of St. Louis. May God be his reward exceeding great in eternal bliss. R.I.P." With the building, the Sisters remembered their Irish heritage and which we, today at Laclede Groves, may find reflective enjoyment when we gaze at the stained glass window depicting St. Patrick and St. Brigid, located in the south wall of the chapel.

In 1920, a beautiful altar imported from Italy replaced the original wooden altar. In 1922, two wings were added to the original building. The wing on the north side was the home of St. Catherine's School for Girls. These girls that were cared for by the Sisters were either orphans or had only one parent. Their education extended to the

eighth grade after which they could attend Nerinx Hall High School. The number of girls cared for was about fifty. Recall of this school may be triggered today when one sees the pre-school girls and boys from the Webster Groves Day Care Center playing or walking in the Village or on the campus.

From 1918 to 1929, St. Joseph Convent served as a Motherhouse and Novitiate for the Missouri Sisters of Mercy. One of the present day Sisters of Mercy who entered the convent as a postulant in 1927, Sister Mary Joseph, remembers that at that time the land was still used as farmland and there were grazing cows that needed care. She also reminisced that the driveway leading to and from the convent formed the shape of an asymmetrical heart, being somewhat wider on one side, making it more like the human heart than the symmetrical hearts seen on Valentine's Day. The white statue of St. Joseph on a pedestal that was located at the entrance to the original convent has been moved to the newest St. Joseph Convent of Mercy and can be seen on their grounds located near St. John's Mercy Medical Center on South New Ballas Road.

In 1929, the convent that served as Motherhouse and Novitiate for the Missouri Sisters of Mercy became the Motherhouse and Novitiate for the entire St. Louis Province which included a total of seven states and served as such, until 1957.

From September 1950 until the church at Glendale Road and Elm Avenue was completed in 1952, Annunciation Parish held church services in what we know as the auditorium and used St. Joseph Convent of Mercy as a temporary home. During the 1960's, retreats for high school and college students were conducted here. In 1970, the Sisters of Mercy sold the property with all the buildings on it and Lutheran Charities Association became the new owners.

In her book, "Webster Groves," Clarissa Start commented on this property transfer, "The change might be looked on as yet another evidence of ecumenical cooperation which has been a part of life in Webster Groves since its beginning." The occasion of the property transfer may recall the legacy of St. Augustine who is one of the eight church fathers portrayed in full length mosaics over the altar in the chapel. The third figure from the center on the north side of the altar represents this great theologian who lived from 354 to 430. Rev. Doctor Arthur Carl Piepkorn states in his booklet, "Of all the church fathers, Saint Augustine probably exerted the greatest influence on the theology of the Lutheran reformation". Martin Luther, who lived from 1483 to 1546, adopted his monastic rule when he became a Hermit of Saint Augustine. Saint Augustine, too, was the basis for the rules of Catherine McAuley when she wrote the constitution for the Sisters of Mercy that she founded in 1831.

Thus a belief in the teachings of "Our Divine Model" (to use the words of Catherine Mc:Auley) impelled the European missionaries to bring Christianity to the new world and the land west of the Mississippi River, inspired women to transport their works of mercy from Ireland and Germany to the U. S. A. and the State of Missouri, and motivates the present generation of Lutherans to continue their services for senior citizens on the Laclede Groves campus. Hopefully, these same teachings will provide meaning and give dignity to the lives of all those who reside on campus.

Just as the year 1919 brought about the completion of the building and the Sisters of Mercy began living in their newly constructed St. Joseph's Convent, so, too, was it the year for the establishment of the Fund for a Lutheran Convalescent Home when the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society of Saint Louis voted to start it with \$500.00 from their treasury. Who would have dared to predict in 1919 that the actions taken by these two groups of women would coalesce in a little more than fifty years and bring further changes to Gregoire Sarpy's land off Laclede Station Road? There was more providential wisdom involved than the Sisters realized when their Superior called the gift of land "heaven sent".

Although 1919 was the beginning of the Fund for the Lutheran Convalescent Home for sick persons having no one to care for them, it was not the beginning of the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society. This was formed in 1901 as a result of a meeting with Rev. F. W. Herzberger, City Missionary of the Lutheran Church in St. Louis. These Lutheran Ladies performed works of mercy, too, by developing a Mission School, a Home for homeless children as well as providing help and donations to the Lutheran Altenheim. After their volunteer work during World War 1 and at the request of Pastor Herzberger, these women started and raised money for the Lutheran Convalescent Home Fund. They were delighted to be able to purchase, renovate, and open the Christy Mansion on Taft Avenue for initial clientele the following year in 1920. Because of the care required for the in-house residents, someone needed to accept responsibility and take charge of running the Convalescent Home. For this, the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society appointed a group of ladies and established the Lutheran Convalescent Home Society. This was the beginning of the group we know today as the Lutheran Convalescent Home Auxiliary.

Time after 1920 brought changes. Some Missouri Synod guilds joined and sent two delegates to the meetings to discuss the wants and needs of the Home. The number of rooms in the original Christy Mansion became inadequate for the number of people requiring care. The Ladies met the challenge by using their "Coffee Klatches" and other creative ideas for fund raising to cover the ongoing costs as well as improving and increasing the size of Christy Mansion. As work and duties increased, the Society grew to the extent that it became necessary to have administration

separate from the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society and this was accomplished in 1933. After this came scientific advances that influenced the care of the sick, increased longevity and transformed many aspects of human life. Social and political changes brought Medicare and Medicaid into existence and with it, numerous Federal regulations. The ladies began to realize that another administrative change was needed. They learned that Lutheran Hospital was looking for an Extended Care Facility. Being prudent, they requested Lutheran Charities Association, whose administrative umbrella extended over Lutheran Hospital, to consider owning and managing their "Home". The transfer of the Lutheran Convalescent Home charter to Lutheran Charities Association took place in 1967. So it was, over the years, that these industrious, diligent, dedicated women with the help of husbands, delegates, and friends, were able to enlarge the Fund of 1919 having five hundred dollars to almost five hundred thousand dollars. With the transfer document, the Ladies proudly gave Missouri Synod Lutherans a debt-free institution, a Memorial Expansion Fund, properties and securities worth almost half a million dollars. Having completed this, the society reorganized and became the Lutheran Convalescent Home Auxiliary. This organization exists today for both women and men and continues to give personal service, to raise funds and to work for the well-being of those who live in the Home. Their activities are made known through their periodic newsletter TIDINGS.

Lutheran Charities Association and, in particular, Lutheran Hospital with its plans for an Extended Care Facility, were aware of the increasing number of older people needing various accommodations to meet their health needs and were looking to enlarge the physical facilities. In 1970, Lutheran Charities Association purchased the sixty four acres of land and the buildings on the property from the Sisters of Mercy. The four story convent was renovated, remodeled and equipped to become the newest Lutheran Convalescent Home.

The property was given the name of Laclede Groves. Historical research found no written information about why or who bestowed the name on this campus. Verbal discussions conjectured that its location had an influence, combining Laclede from its address on Laclede Station Road with Groves from its location in the City of Webster Groves. If Groves was not derived from its city locale, its source was the same, with the groves of trees growing on its rolling land. To be more precise, it may be the oak trees since this motif is carried out in naming Laclede Oaks Manor and the Village of Laclede Oaks. The Forest in Lohmann Forest Lane carries the tree theme. The Laclede Groves logo is a full grown tree.

Those living on the Laclede Groves campus in 1997 can see some of the original buildings with the chapel, as well as all the changes made since 1970 under the auspices of the Lutherans. One of the changes seen on paper is the name Lutheran

Senior Services. This name replaced Lutheran Charities Association on March 21, 1996 when delegates representing seventy three member congregations approved the change. They felt Lutheran Senior Services was a better description of their mission which is to provide the best possible care for older adults. With this complete reorganization of their operations, a separate entity, Lutheran Charities Foundation, was established.

The building that was originally a convent and, after its purchase in 1970, renovated to become the Lutheran Convalescent Home opened its door for frail elderly in 1972. With the passage of time, it has seen more renovations and increased in size with the newest addition opening in 1995. According to the Village Resident's Handbook issued January, 1997, it is now a 240 bed facility offering sub-acute, skilled and intermediate nursing care which includes some Medicare and Medicaid operated beds. It includes a 24 bed unit that treats those residents with specialized dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. This year, 1997, celebrates the 25th anniversary of its opening.

Another alteration for the Lutheran Convalescent Home affecting the entire Laclede Groves campus occurred in 1996 when the Communications Center was installed in the original building of 1919. Village residents welcomed this because it is pivotal for the operation of telephone lines that monitor alarms for emergencies requiring a nurse, reporting a fire, and identifying breaks in the security of each home.

A building for active retired persons, Laclede Oaks Manor was opened in 1983 with 105 apartments, but it was soon fully occupied. This need resulted in further construction and expansion in 1988 to its current size of 206 units for ambulatory residents. These men and women have a full program of activities, housekeeping and transportation services. One meal daily, either lunch or dinner, is provided in the Dining Room. This Dining Room also serves other ambulatory residents on Laclede Groves campus and, with these increasing in number, the space was enlarged. In December, 1994, the seating capacity of the Dining Room increased from 185 to 240.

During the ten years after the opening of the first apartment in Laclede Oaks Manor, those living beyond 65 years of age continued to increase in number. More scientific, geriatric health studies were done. Changes were taking place in the care of those hospitalized and in hospital and medical insurance plans. Filling the void in facilities for persons that needed some, but not complete care, was the building of Laclede Commons. According to the Village Resident's Handbook, it opened in February 1993 with 80 apartment units and expanded in 1995 to its current size of 136 apartments. It provides residential care to adults who need assistance with daily activities but do not require skilled medical care.

A new, enlarged entrance to Laclede Groves was made and the Gatehouse completed by November 1992. The Gatehouse was planned to be used primarily for special functions and not on a daily basis. Even with the changes made in the driveways leading to and from the Convalescent Home, curved remnants of the original heart seen and known in the late 1920's by Sister Mary Joseph remain. The heart outline which is symbolic of love and compassion is most appropriate for the message and the mission of present day Lutherans.

January 4, 1993 was the official date for Webster Groves Day Care Center's move into the newly constructed building on Laclede Groves campus designed specifically for child day care. Lutheran Health Care Association (now known as Lutheran Senior Services) recognized the value of interaction between the elderly and children. When they were planning the intergenerational program, it was logical for them to contact Webster Groves Day Care Center. This independent, accredited, not-for-profit agency was founded by the Ecumenical Ministry of Webster Groves and opened its first door for children of working parents on September 10, 1973 in the basement of Christ Lutheran Church. Over the years, their need to serve infant, toddler, and pre-school children resulted in an outgrowth of their facilities. They were delighted to be able to cooperate with this retirement complex in planning for the building and playgrounds, then to lease it and operate it independently. Prior to 1993, the children would make visits to Laclede Groves, but being located on campus allowed for the possibility of daily activities and for residents who are able to come to the center to read, to play with, and to hold children. This center where children are cherished stresses superior developmental care to children regardless of social, economic, religious or ethnic backgrounds.

Construction of the patio homes in the Village of Laclede Oaks began in 1994. The homes designated for Phase I of the project were soon occupied and the decision was made to complete all of the originally planned 54 homes. This was followed with more construction when 3 buildings, each with 16 apartments, were started. The first residents of these additional 48 apartments began moving in January, 1997. All of the homes and apartments in the Village have garages. The Village was constructed for active senior citizens who receive services similar to those in the Manor. One exception for those in the Village is their 10 meals per month in the Dining Room. Construction of the Club House (or recreation center) with pool and meeting rooms for residents of the Village began in January, 1997.

When the Village of Laclede Oaks was planned, the streets were named Eckrich Place, Lohmann Forest Lane, and Imse Drive. Eckrich Place is named to honor John R. Eckrich, who was President of Lutheran Charities Association from 1957 to 1984. He was administrator of Lutheran Hospital in 1967 when the women of the

Executive Board of the Lutheran Convalescent Home Society requested Lutheran Charities Association to operate their Lutheran Convalescent Home and maintain its mission and dedication to caring for infirm residents. Under his guidance, Lutheran Charities Association purchased the Laclede Groves land and buildings that existed in 1970 from the Sisters of Mercy. His portrait is located in the lobby of the Convalescent Home.

Lohmann Forest Lane received its name from Hilmar M. Lohmann, who was an assistant to John R. Eckrich. In recent years, Mr. Lohmann has worked with the Lutheran Convalescent Home Auxiliary and is serving this year as Vice-President.

Imse Drive is named to honor Robert and Florence Imse, who have donated time, work, and financial assistance to Lutheran Charities Association. Their bountiful contributions benefit the indigent residents of the Lutheran Convalescent Home. Meditation is enhanced in the chapel by their gifts, a few of which are the Main Altar, specified stain glass windows, and a new lighting system installed in January, 1996. All residents can appreciate their generosity and find enjoyment when they hear the Carillon chimes that so enhance the ambiance of the campus. Furthermore, Florence Imse has been a member of the Board for many years and has used her talents to serve as President of the Lutheran Convalescent Home Auxiliary for the past twelve years. The Village of Laclede Oaks is fortunate in having this lady, who is known for her love of the color purple, as one of its residents.

In addition to enjoying one's home, apartment or other building on campus, residents can find pleasure out-of-doors. The installation of the new fountain in the pond that is located between the Manor and the Village Patio Homes on Eckrich Place occurred in October, 1994. This luminous fountain can be viewed daily in spring, summer, or fall between 7:00 a.m. and midnight. In early 1997, spawning fish were observed in the pond.

For those who walk for exercise or pleasure, mulch trails under the trees around a portion of the campus, asphalt trails around the pond and all concrete walks are planned for completion in 1997. If and when the budget allows it, golf enthusiasts may enjoy practice on the putting greens, golf tees and greens.

Residents who have a green thumb or who are interested in growing plants can reserve space in the Community Vegetable Garden. This is located south of the apartment building at 719 Imse Drive and was opened in 1980. It competed with 487 other community gardens and won national recognition in 1984 and 1986 by winning division awards. This division included the states of Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, North and South Dakota.

Nature study on the campus reveals "All things bright and beautiful" and recalls words from a poem by Cecil Frances Alexander. All creatures great and small can be seen in the foxes, raccoons, rabbits, squirrels and various other animals that inhabit woodlands. A wild turkey has been observed strutting on the grounds. A gaggle of geese can be heard or seen eating, walking or flying. Ducks enjoy the pond and its surroundings. Bird lovers with their binoculars can recite a complete list of birds that sing and have tiny wings. However, some of the more common of our feathered friends flying about are cardinals, robins, sparrows, bluebirds and blue jays. Who has not been irritated when seeing grackles empty their bird feeder? Who has not been fascinated watching a wren build a nest?

The spiteful soil on campus is too meager for lush growth of flowers and bushes but with the help of compost, mulch, tender loving care of home resident-turned-gardener together with the sun and the right amount of rain or watering, vegetation does sprout, flowers do bloom, and bushes do blossom. Oh, what delight to see the glowing colors!

The vegetation towering over the flowers, plants and animals are the various trees, some of which are old, others newly planted. Whether looking out of one's window or strolling on the campus, the tree has dominance in nature as well as in the motif of Laclede Groves. Slowly, one tries to recall the words of the poem "Trees" learned long ago in school. Eventually, the nagging thoughts impel one to find a book with the written words of the poet, Joyce Kilmer. For the poet's word "poems" the author of this chapter could substitute the word "prose". In closing, the words of Joyce Kilmer are given for you to ponder.

"I think that I shall never see,  
A poem lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed,  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast.  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray.  
A tree that may in summer wear,  
A nest of robins in her hair.  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain,  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree."