



Guests gather for a ceremony dedicating a Liberty Tree, foreground, at Central Park in Winter Park on Friday. Sponsored by the William P. Duval chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, the live oak sapling was planted to commemorate the nation's 250th birthday. **JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL**

Winter Park gets Liberty Tree for celebration of nation turning 250

By Matthew J. Palm
Orlando Sentinel

Winter Park has a new tree — one designed to commemorate the sacrifices of those who brought our nation into being and remind us of our duty to keep their ideals alive.

A Liberty Tree, named for a historical gathering spot in colonial Boston, was dedicated Friday morning in Winter Park's Central Park, as Winter Park High musicians played patriotic tunes and members of the school's Junior ROTC program carried the Stars and Stripes.

The tree, an 18-foot-tall live oak at the park's north end, and a commemorative marker were donated by the William P. Duval Chapter of the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution.

"Winter Park is proud to be a city of culture and heritage and, just as importantly, a city of trees," said Winter Park Mayor Sheila DiCiccio at Friday's ceremony. The Liberty Tree, she said, would be "a daily reminder of our country's principles of courage, resistance, hope and freedom." The Daughters of the American Revolution, a charitable service organization, is comprised of women who can document their genealogy back to a Revolutionary War soldier or other patriot of that era. The local chapter provided the tree as one of its events commemorating the 250th anniversary of the

signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

Events presented by many organizations and municipalities are planned throughout Central Florida during this semiquincentennial year. The city of Winter Park has a full slate of art, music, literary and other cultural programs scheduled through July; see the full list at cityofwinterpark.org/america-250.

The original Liberty Tree was planted in Boston in the mid-17th century as part of an elm grove. By the 1760s, it had become a shady meeting place where the Sons of Liberty protested new taxes imposed by King George III, and the concept of a Liberty Tree spread to other colonial towns.

"A wonder of nature, a simple tree, became an American symbol of freedom," said Ann Maner, chair of the Duval chapter's "America 250!" events. When the hated Stamp Act, which placed a tax on nearly all printed documents, was overturned, Bostonians celebrated by hanging 150 lanterns on their Liberty Tree, Maner said. Winter Park's tree pays homage to that, with 13 solar-powered lanterns in its branches to symbolize the original 13 British colonies that formed the United States.

The tree was obtained from the city's regular tree supplier and planted Jan. 8 to make sure it was established before the ceremony on Friday, a date picked because it's also Florida's Arbor Day.

April Douglas, regent of the Winter Park-based Duval chapter, said about \$5,000 was spent on the project, with the money coming from fundraising and an America 250 grant from the state of Florida. The engraved bronze marker, which honors the original Boston Liberty Tree and denotes that this tree was planted to honor the nation's 250th birthday, cost \$3,500 alone, she said.

"May we dedicate ourselves anew to the freedoms we enjoy every day because of the courage and tenacity of the original patriots," Douglas said in her address. "We are blessed to live in a community that values freedom."

Boston's Liberty Tree was a casualty of war: In August 1775, colonists still loyal to the crown and British soldiers cut it down and burned it.

Douglas foresees a longer life for Central Park's newest resident, branches rippling in the breeze on the sunny but cool morning. Live oaks are known to flourish for centuries. "This tree is a monument that lives, breathes and grows," she said. "And we hope this tree will thrive for generations to come."

Follow me at facebook.com/matthew.j.palm or email me at mpalm@orlandosentinel.com. Find more entertainment news and reviews at orlandosentinel.com/entertainment or sign up to receive our weekly emailed Entertainment newsletter.