



**A Proposal
for Installing a Liberty Tree Marker
on the Capitol Grounds, Helena Montana**

By

Montana State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Montana Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Anticipated Installation Date: September 2026

A Proposal for Installing a Liberty Tree Marker on the Capitol Grounds, Helena Montana

REQUEST

This is a request to place a bronze marker and surround (ring) next to the Bur Oak tree being sponsored by DAR and SAR for the capitol grounds (south side, exact location TBD) via the state's Memorial Tree Program. General Services Division anticipates the tree will be planted in May or June 2026.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MARKER

During 2026, we celebrate a once-in-a-lifetime event—America's 250th Anniversary. As with other states, Montana has a 250th Commission coordinating and supporting various events and celebrations. The DAR/SAR tree is meant to be part of the larger Montana 250 celebration.



Our proposal is to install a substantial bronze marker and surround at the base of the DAR/SAR oak to mark it as a "Liberty Tree." Liberty Trees, closely associated with the American Revolution, were widespread during the Revolutionary War, as citizens convened under their community's Liberty Tree, a rallying point for protest and patriotism. These trees became beacons of hope to colonists and a visible statement of unity, courage, and resistance. (See Page 5 for a full explanation of Liberty Trees.)

DESIGN OVERVIEW

Cast Bronze Marker

- Could also choose cast aluminum.
- Installed at ground level, embedded in concrete. Marker comes with a bronze stake (rod) for concrete.
- Two size options: 12 x 9" or 18 x 12"
- Weight: 15 pounds
- Provider: Z Flag Store (<https://zflagstore.com/product/d-a-r-plaque/>)
- Anticipated DAR/SAR cost: \$1,000 – 1,500 (plus S/H)

Tree Surround

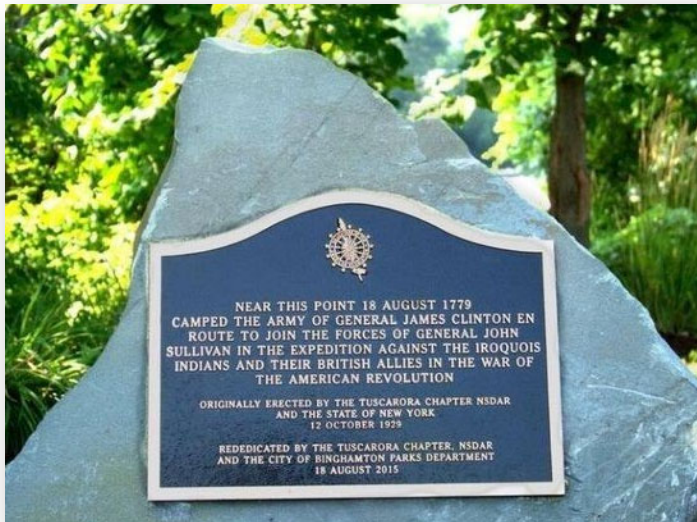
- Starting at the marker, around the tree just outside the mulch line, is to be a "surround" (a tree ring) also constructed of cement, approximately 5-6 inches wide.
- In each of 13 sections of the surround will be a small (fist-sized) rock from each of the 13 original colonies. Each rock will be engraved with the state's abbreviation.
- Construction of the surround, either pre-cast or cast on site, to be based on State of Montana preferences.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Ease of maintenance.
2. Minimal impact on sightlines around the oak.
3. Non-invasive installation (so as not to impact any underground irrigation systems in the vicinity of the oak).
4. Security of marker and the 13 colony stones.
5. Longevity of materials and installation.

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Example of bronze marker:



Proposed Wording of Liberty Tree Marker:

LIBERTY TREE

AMERICA'S FIRST SYMBOL OF FREEDOM

THIS BUR OAK PLANTED IN MEMORY OF THE BRAVE PATRIOTS WHO RALLIED UNDER LIBERTY TREES, LIVING MONUMENTS TO THE CAUSE OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

PLACED BY MONTANA DAR AND MONTANA SAR

ON [MO. DAY], 2026

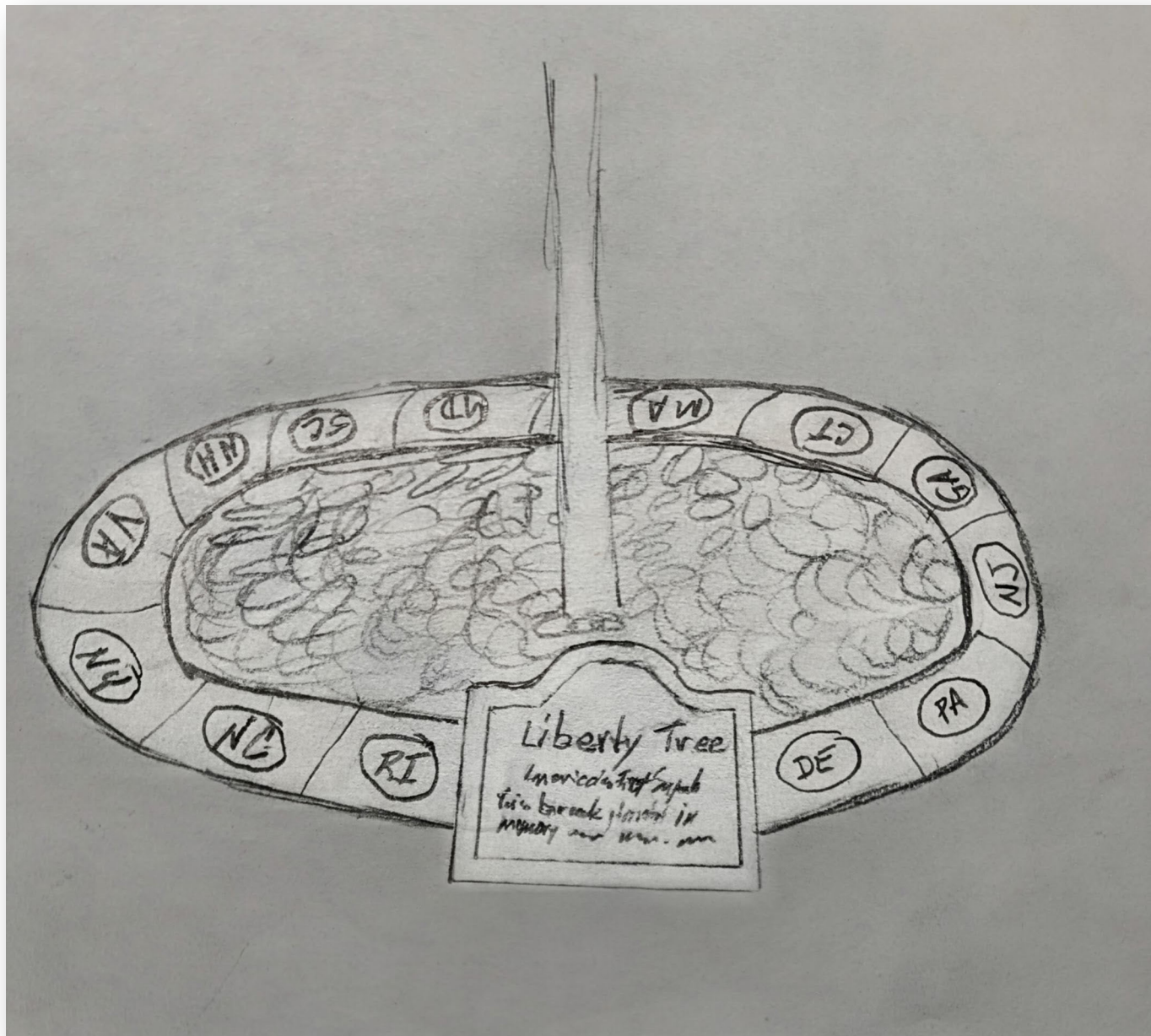
HONORING AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY

Example 1 - Concrete tree surround enclosing tree mulch:
(For illustrative purposes only; grass will surround tree, not bricks.)



Example 2 - Potential shape of tree surround blocks:





Pencil Sketch of the Marker and Surround Concept (Note: state names to be in order of signing the Constitution)

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The Liberty Tree

A Living Symbol of Freedom

In the years leading up to the American Revolution, ordinary colonists rallied not only around ideas but also around powerful symbols. One of the most enduring was the Liberty Tree, a large elm just off Boston commons that became an important gathering place for protest and patriotism. Beginning in 1765, as opposition to the Stamp Act began to spread, members of the Sons of Liberty decorated the tree with banners and lanterns and even hung effigies of unpopular British officials from its branches. The Liberty Tree was no mere plant; it became a visible statement of unity, courage, and resistance. British troops, recognizing its power, cut it down in 1775, but by then its symbolism had already spread across the colonies.

As word of Boston's Liberty Tree spread, other towns followed suit. Communities designated their own Liberty Trees or erected Liberty Poles in public squares. In Charleston, South Carolina, patriots gathered beneath the shade of a massive oak to share news and plan resistance. In New York City, colonists raised Liberty Poles in defiance of British soldiers who repeatedly chopped them down, only to see them raised again. These sites became rallying points for speeches, celebrations, and readings of revolutionary resolutions, standing as living monuments to the cause of independence.

The symbolism of these trees and poles ran deep. They were reminders that liberty was rooted in community, growing, branching, and uniting people from different

backgrounds. They also embodied defiance: a Liberty Pole raised in sight of a British garrison declared boldly that colonists would not be silenced. Even after independence, Liberty Trees continued to be remembered as sacred ground where the seeds of America's freedom first took root.

Today, the idea of the Liberty Tree is being reborn as communities prepare to celebrate the nation's Semiquincentennial in 2026. In 2017, the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution planted the first of 76 trees at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, symbolizing the *Spirit of 1776* and creating a living tribute to liberty.

America250AL, the America 250 Commission in Alabama is offering Legacy Grants to each county to plant a Princeton Elm and mark the location with a plaque. In Pennsylvania, America250PA is partnering with the Freemasons to plant one Liberty Tree in each of the state's 67 counties. In Texas, a Mexican Red Oak was dedicated in Conroe as Montgomery County's Liberty Tree during an America 250 kickoff event. And in Carlinville, Illinois, a coastal redwood planted in 1955 will be formally dedicated as a Liberty Tree in 2025, tying its story of survival in non-native soil to the resilience of the American experiment. Local DAR chapters are also leading the way: in Wisconsin, the Fort Atkinson-Eli Pierce Chapter dedicated a new elm tree in Evergreen Cemetery as a Liberty Tree, complete with a commemorative marker honoring the patriots of the Revolution.

These modern Liberty Trees remind us that history is not just preserved in archives and monuments, but also lives and breathes in our landscapes. Each planting ceremony connects present-day citizens to the patriots who once gathered under branches or around poles to proclaim their determination for freedom.

As we look toward America 250, the Daughters of the American Revolution and other civic organizations have a unique opportunity to resurrect the tradition of Liberty Trees. By planting oaks, lindens, or other resilient native species, we can create living memorials that honor our ancestors and inspire future generations. These trees will stand not only as markers of our nation's 250th birthday but as enduring symbols of unity, resilience, and liberty itself. Just as the Liberty Trees of the Revolution brought people together in common purpose, so too can the Liberty Trees we plant today become lasting reminders that the roots of freedom must always be nurtured and protected.

The Original Liberty Tree

- In **1765**, as colonists protested the Stamp Act, Boston patriots chose a great elm tree near Essex and Washington Streets as their rallying place.
- Effigies of British officials were hung from its branches, transforming it into a bold symbol of resistance.
- The tree became so famous that **the Sons of Liberty often gathered there** to make speeches, share news, and organize protests.
- British troops recognized its influence and **cut the tree down in 1775**, but its symbolism had already taken root across the colonies.
- Thomas Paine later wrote that "*the world should never forget that it was under the branches of the Liberty Tree that America was born.*"

Ideal Liberty Tree Species by Region

Midwest

- **Bur Oak**
Hardy, drought/cold resistant, very long-lived
- **Hackberry**
Tough, urban-tolerant, bird-friendly
- **Kentucky Coffeetree**
Unusual, pest-resistant, frontier symbol

Northeast

- **White Oak**
Long-lived, symbolic, pest resistant
- **American Beech**
Historic, shade tolerant, disease emerging
- **American Linden / Basswood**
Pollinator-friendly, adaptable

Southeast

- **Southern Live Oak**
Iconic, long-lived, resilient
- **Tulip Poplar**
Tall, fast-growing, bicentennial symbol
- **Sweetgum**
Brilliant fall color, historic uses

Southwest

- **Mexican White Oak**
Heat/drought tolerant, semi-evergreen
- **Desert Willow**
Flowering, pollinator-friendly, low water
- **Arizona Cypress**
Evergreen, aromatic, drought tolerant

West

- **California Sycamore**
Hardy, fast-growing, anthracnose resistant
- **Douglas Fir**
Iconic conifer, long-lived
- **Quaking Aspen**
Rocky Mountain symbol, brilliant fall color

