

# Elm tree rooted in seaside park

## Scouts help celebrate 'Liberty'

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HAMPTON — Bicentennial Park has a new addition, a 12-foot Liberty elm tree. Hampton Boy Scouts from Troop 177 unveiled the tree at the North Beach park during a ceremony on Thursday, Sept. 18.

"I think this is going to be a beautiful addition," said Linda Gephart, of the Friends of Bicentennial Park, which has been working with others to beautify the town-owned park.

Gephart said the tree was donated to the town by the Liberty Elm Research Institute of Keene. The total package, valued at \$2,500, included a special bronze plaque with an inscription that recounts the history of Boston's Liberty Tree. The tree was once the rallying place for the Sons of Liberty during the American Revolution.

Gephart said the nonprofit organization wanted to offer the Hampton group the tree, that was made available through an anonymous donation, after hearing about all the work members have done to



Boy Scouts from Troop 177 were on hand to dedicate a new Liberty elm tree planted at Bicentennial Park. PATRICK CRONIN PHOTO

beautify the park.

The only stipulation was that the local Boy Scouts be a part of the dedication since it was the Boy Scouts of America who joined the institute in 1984 in its effort to restore the American Elm from extinction.

Gephart said she was contacted through town's Park and Recreation Department, which oversees the park, and the town was in favor of accepting the gift.

Boy Scout Troop 177 Senior Patrol Leader Dan Argue said a lot of work went into planting the tree. He thanked the Friends of Bicentennial Park, Chet and Diane Riley for donating the stone and Roger Syphers for the work needed to place the plaque on the stone.

He also gave a special thanks to former Troop 177 member Robert "Renny" Cushing, who, as a state representative sponsored a resolution to have elm trees planted along Route 1.

"Let's hope this Liberty elm will inspire our town to bring Liberty elms on this historic road and elsewhere in our town," Argue said.

Argue said the Scouts were honored to be included in the planting of a type of tree that once was a prominent sight in town. "2008 is the 75 anniversary of the establishment of Troop 177 in Hampton," Argue said. "We believe the Liberty elm is fitting memorial for all the troop has contributed to the community and a reminder for future Scouts to

Gephart and her husband were named stewards of the tree. Linda said the elm should fit in nicely at the seaside park.

Elizabeth Webb, of the town's Shade Tree Committee, agreed. "I'm very glad they were able to get (it), they were able to plant it and the town took it," Webb said. "People are going to enjoy it."

The Elm Research Institute was established in 1967 with the purpose of saving the American elm from extinction. The institute sponsored genetic research that resulted in the American Liberty elm, a purebred descendant of disease-resistant American elms.

It is the only elm with a lifetime warranty against Dutch elm disease which killed almost all of the elm trees around, including ones that once stood tall in Hampton.

The institute has been establishing memorials in communities across the country to commemorate the birth of freedom and help restore the tree.



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## Rooted in Honor

### Troop 177 Dedicates American Liberty Elm as Service Project

By Liz Premo, *Atlantic News* Staff Writer

*Atlantic News*, Friday, September 26, 2008

[The following article is courtesy of *Atlantic News*]



**WE ARE PREPARED!** -- Members of Troop 177 gather around the newly planted American Liberty Elm tree at Bicentennial Park for a benediction at the conclusion of the dedication ceremony.  
 [Atlantic News Photo by Liz Premo]

Bicentennial Park at North Beach is now home to a newly planted American Liberty Elm tree, thanks to

a collaborative effort between Hampton's Boy Scout Troop 177, an anonymous Rotary Club donor, and numerous others in the Seacoast area community.

About 50 people were in attendance when the troop conducted an official dedication ceremony during the early evening of Thursday, September 18. The tree, obtained through the Elm Research Institute in Keene, had been planted and prepped earlier in the week with assistance from the Friends of Bicentennial Park. The group is responsible for the extensive rejuvenation and beautification that has recently taken place at the oceanfront site.

The planting and dedication of the American Liberty Elm was just one in a series of activities and events Troop 177 has held this year in observance of its 75th anniversary. And according to Larry Marsolais, committee chairman for Troop 177, it's a good opportunity for the Scouts to give back to the town.

"It's a good service project for them [and] for the beach," he said. "This is a nice park; [the tree] adds to it."

The ceremony began with the Troop presenting the colors and conducting the Pledge of Allegiance. Senior Patrol Leader, Dan Argue, offered a welcome to all in attendance and recognized those who were instrumental in bringing the project to fruition.

Among those individuals so acknowledged were Elizabeth Webb of Hampton's Shade Tree Commission; John and Linda Gebhart and other members of the Friends of Bicentennial Park; Bud and Lois DesRochers, who coordinated the placement of the tree and its commemorative stone; Chet and Dianne Riley (for the stone) and Roger Syphers (for placing the plaque on the stone).

Also acknowledged were Town Manager Fred Welch and Hampton Recreation Director Dyana Martin; John Price of the Public Works Department; Frank Swift for site preparation and planting; Churchill's Garden Center (for loam) and Filtrine Manufacturing, which handled purchasing and transporting the tree from Keene to Hampton.

SPL Argue thanked the anonymous Rotary Club member who provided "a significant financial contribution" that helped make the \$2500 project possible. Also noted was Robert "Renny" Cushing, who as a state representative in 1997 sponsored a resolution calling for the restoration of elm trees along Route 1.

"Let's hope that this Liberty Elm will inspire our town to bring elms back to our section of this historic road and elsewhere in town," said SPL Argue.

After providing a brief history of elms in the Hampton area, their devastation by Dutch Elm Disease and the development of the Elm Research Institute's Liberty Elm program, SPL Argue told the crowd that the organization "developed a program for Boy Scout troops to plant Liberty Elms in their communities."

Observing that "2008 is the 75th anniversary of the establishment of Troop 177 in Hampton," SPL Argue noted, "We believe that this Liberty Elm is a fitting memorial for all that the troop has contributed to the community and a reminder to every Scout and Scouter to continue in that tradition."



**HONORABLE SERVICE** -- Ansell Palmer, one of Troop 177's first members 75 years ago, places a shovelful of soil at the base of the American Liberty Elm at Bicentennial Park.

*[Atlantic News Photos by Liz Premo]*

Playing a significant part in the dedication service was Ansell Palmer, an original member of Troop 177 when it was first formed in 1933. Palmer was the first to place a ceremonial shovelful of soil at the base of the elm tree; he was followed in kind by the Pedro Patrol, Troop 177's newest members.

The ceremony continued with the unveiling of the memorial plaque, affixed to a stone that stands in front of the tree. Leaders from Troop 177's Frontiersmen Patrol and Flaming Arrow Patrol removed a length of fabric to reveal the plaque, which was read aloud by one of the Scouts: "This American Liberty Elm was named after "The Liberty Tree: Our Country's First Symbol of Freedom." On the morning of August 14, 1765, the people of Boston awakened to discover two effigies suspended from an elm tree in protest of the hated Stamp Act. From that day forward, that elm became known as "The Liberty Tree." It stood in silent witness to countless meetings, speeches and celebrations, and became the rallying place for the Sons of Liberty. In August of 1775, as a last act of violence prior to their evacuation of Boston, British Soldiers cut it down because it bore the name "Liberty."

The Scout added, "It is very fitting that this Liberty Elm should have a prominent place in our Bicentennial Park."

The ceremony continued with a poem read by Scoutmaster Doug Aykroyd, and the presentation of a letter from the Scouts to Hampton Selectman Bill Lally. The letter, read by Scout Alex Cawley, formalized in writing the troop's "commitment to service" both past and future.

"We the Scouts of Troop 177 recognize the contributions made to our community for 75 years by the Scouts of our troop who have come before us," Cawley read. "We pledge to do our best to be ready to

continue to serve our community into the future."

The ceremony concluded with Troop 177, clapping hands in a circle around the tree, holding a traditional closing and benediction, and reciting the chant, "Be prepared!" "We ARE prepared!"

"It was an exciting opportunity," said Scoutmaster Aykroyd following the ceremony. "It came out of the blue."

Taking on the American Liberty Elm project for this portion of Hampton, he added, broadens the boys' own perception of Scouting.

"When we go camping [and] hiking, they have a good time," said Aykroyd. "[When] doing ceremonies like this they see the other side of Scouting, which is equally important." In fact, he added, he heard one Scout say, "I'm proud I was here tonight."



The two Scouts who unveiled the plaque during the dedication ceremony are shown in this photograph.

*[Atlantic News Photos by Liz Premo]*

To find out more about the American Liberty Elm tree program visit [www.landscapeelms.com](http://www.landscapeelms.com); for more about Troop 177 visit [www.bsatroop177.org](http://www.bsatroop177.org).