

ARBOR 2023 DAY REMARKS – It Takes a Village to Raise a Tree

We have lots of people to thank!

Ronnie Schoelzel, for arranging a sycamore cutting workshop with Adam Wheeler of Broken Arrow Nursery on November 5, 2010.

Hugh Schoelzel, husband of Ronnie and our intrepid new HM, for climbing a 16' ladder to take cuttings from new growth at the top of the Wolcott Sycamore. This tree, in front of St. Anthony's Church, is the only surviving tree from the original planting in 1779.

Seton O'Reilly, who brought 6 cuttings from the workshop to her friend, Meredith Penfield, who was out of town.

Meredith Penfield, the Star of the Show! She produced the only viable cutting from the workshop. In the winter of 2011, one of the cuttings she received from Seton sprouted a small green leaf, and then more. She took it to Maine that summer, and thus began a pattern with Barbara MacDonald, who wintered the tree before it went to Maine for the summer with Meredith.

After a few years, the little tree became a big tree and couldn't make the trip to Maine anymore, so it spent the next summer with **Nancy and Sky Post**.

In the Fall of 2013, **Anna and Richard Heys** oversaw its planting by **Gary Rodgers** in front of the Tapping Reeve Law School. That year commemorated both the 100th anniversary of the Litchfield Garden Club and the Garden Club of America.

Thanks to **Cathy Field**, Director of Litchfield Historical Society, who approved LGC's request to plant the tree in that special spot, where it stands today in "splendid elegance," in Meredith's words. Thanks also to **Rosie Furniss** our LGC member and President of the Litchfield Historical Society who oversees all the wonderful community activities of the Society, including the Litchfield Walking Tours, conducted by **Kate Zullo**, which features our tree.

Today we're here to dedicate the plaque in front of this tree, thanks to the efforts of our Project Chairs, **Drew Harlow** and **Ellen Oneglia**, and Ellen's husband, **Ray Oneglia** of O&G who installed the plaque.

The plaque gives a brief history of the tree. Additional History, in 1779, Oliver Wolcott Jr. planted 13 trees as a gift to his hometown to commemorate the original 13 colonies of the United States. He was a son of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Oliver Wolcott Sr. During the war, when Wolcott Jr. was 16, he served as quartermaster and assisted with the army stores and ordinances in Litchfield. He was only 19 when he planted these trees! Thereafter, he had a successful career in finance and politics, serving a Secretary of Treasury following Alexander Hamilton, and then Governor of Connecticut.

So it is fitting that we honor his vision on Arbor Day, a holiday which inspires people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. In the words of the Father of Arbor Day, Sterling Morton, "Other holidays repose upon the past; Arbor Day proposes for the future."