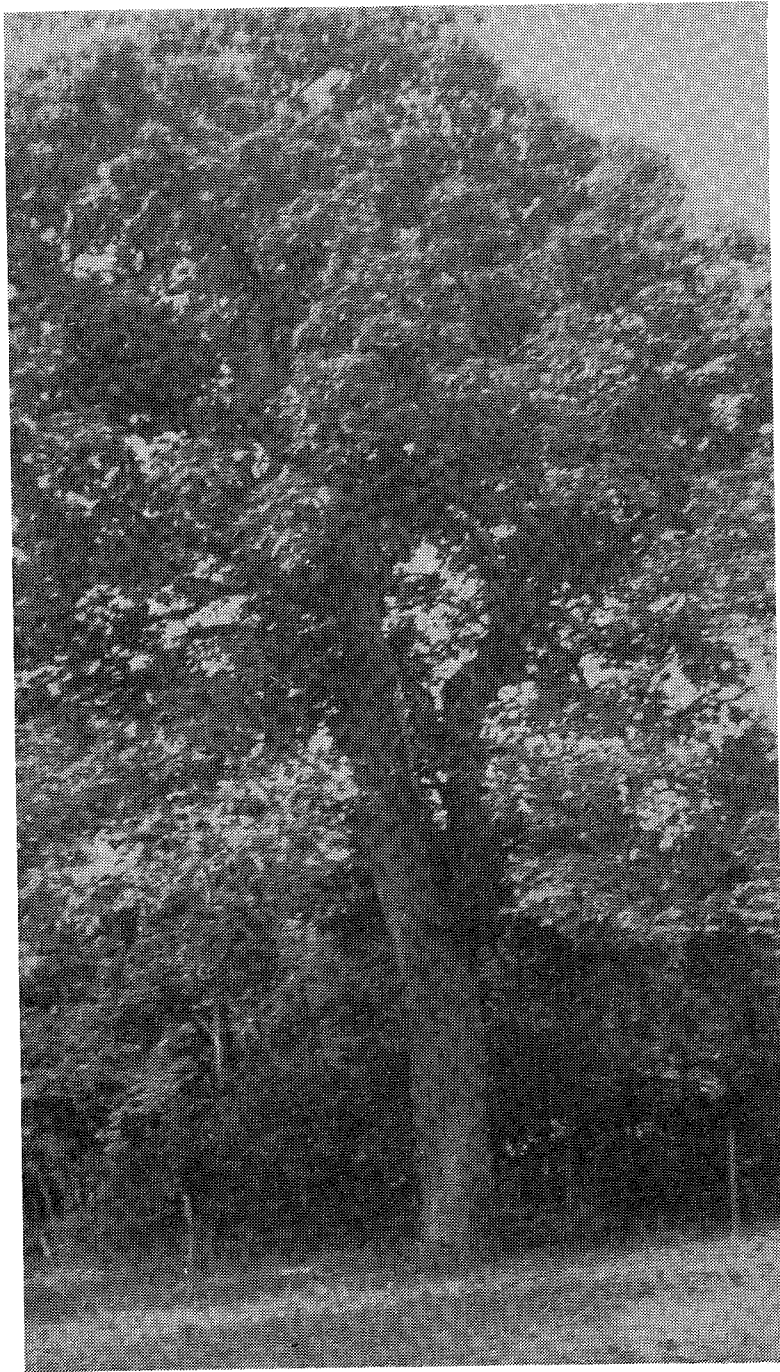


The Chariton Liberty Tree

By Mark McIntyre and Al Lewis



The Liberty Tree located on Clifford Scriven's farm is more than 200 years old. This picture, taken more than 50 feet away, shows the immense size of the tree.

It is difficult for most people to realize just how important trees have been to the development of our country. Wood was our first fuel source. Crude cabins constructed of logs supplied many a settler with shelter from the elements. Cut wood has been used for everything from railroad ties to framing for modern homes. Wood pulp is an important part of everyday life as it provides such necessities as paper and cardboard. One tree in Boston, Massachusetts, is even a national monument.

This is the historic Liberty Tree; a symbol of the brave resistance to the English Tyranny. This inspired the planners of our 1976 Bicentennial Celebration to include trees as part of our nation's heritage. The planners then drafted a plan that would stress the importance of every tree; but would also give special recognition to trees that were 200 years old. They then urged each state to look for trees that would meet the age requirements. Such trees would then be designated with the official title of "Liberty Tree" of the Bicentennial Celebration.

Each state then asked its counties to search for trees that might meet the age requirement. Any such tree would then be tested for its age by a representative of the State Forester's Office. This task was simplified by the fact that all tree species don't live past 200 years. Any tree that could live beyond 200 years would then have its diameter measured. Each type of tree has an average growth rate. The tester then multiplied the diameter by the growth rate. If the result was greater than or equal to the average accepted value, the tree was considered to be 200 years old.

Adair County was fortunate enough to find two such trees; one located in Kirksville and the other near Novinger. The tree that we are concerned with is located near Novinger on the farm of Clifford Scrivens; just up the hill from the east bank of the Chariton River.

Mr. Scrivens' tree is a Chinkapin Oak. It is around 100 feet high and has a circumference of about 60 inches. Clifford's tree was 200 years of age in 1976 and is 206 years old now. He received a certificate that honored his tree's historic age, which is considered to be one of the oldest in our state.

The fervor of our Bicentennial Celebration and the history of our great nation has been recorded in history books, for all to study and to learn. But history has a way of overlooking the little things that make the major events possible. So next time you are driving through the country, stop and admire the trees along the way. Remember how important the common tree has been to our daily lives and its part in our history.